

THE GREAT COMMISSION TO PARENTS:
DISCIPLING OUR CHILDREN

A THESIS

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BY

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To my wife Beth, you are a gift from God. I Love you.

Michael, Andrew, Wesley, I love you guys.

May the Schwind family follow the Great Commission for generations to come.

Train up a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart from it.

—Proverbs 22:6

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the impact of a four week focused training session on the Great Commission and implementation in discipling children.

The participants were eighteen parents and grandparents within New Community Church of St. Marys Ohio.

Robert Coleman's eight principles in *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (selection, association, consecration, impartation, demonstration, delegation, supervision and reproduction) were the major focus of instruction and hands on week to week assignments.

Results from pre- and post-project interviews showed apparent changes in the participants improved awareness and willingness to further their efforts in an intentional process of parental discipleship.

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEMS AND QUESTIONS

The problem in the church and the culture in general is that many parents have given up their God-given responsibility and privilege to disciple their children. In an age of technological advancements and fast-paced lives, parents appear to have given up on taking an active and intentional role in their children's lives. Yes, they do provide for the essential needs like food and clothing but many parents stop there.

For example, the cell phone used to be a tool used for phone calls and convenience. Every month new phones with more and more options of communicating appear at the local phone stores. Now texting, internet access and GPS systems are commonplace. As a parent, it is a little overwhelming to see the rate of technological advances exploding in front of us. New video games, TV shows and music all cry out for the attention of our children.

However, the busyness of our culture and the rapid change in technology is just one of the myriad excuses for parents not discipling their children. According to recent surveys parents are more important in their children's spiritual development than they realize:

Barna's surveys point out that most parents underestimate the influence they can exert on their children. Consequently, they often neglect emphasis upon activities that would strengthen their relational bond with the children. Many parents, even those who are born again Christians, also overlook the need to foster deeper a connection between their children and God, or to enhance the child's worldview as a critical component of their decision-making skills.¹

¹ George Barna, "Barna Finds Four Mega-Themes in Recent Research," <http://www.barna.org/culture-articles/89> [accessed February 8, 2010].

*Soul Searching The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*² by

Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton is based on one of the largest surveys taken in regards to teenagers in America to date. The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) surveyed over 3,300 teenagers and had in depth follow-up interviews with over 250 of the respondents from 2001 to 2005.

The findings in this study is consistent with the other findings I have found in my research. For example, "Most are quite content to follow in their parents footsteps."³ In like manner, on the same page section of this book it states, "Rather, the vast majority are happy simply to accept the one religion in which they were raised."⁴

The study also showed the importance of the parents influence on their children's development as stated in this quote. "Contrary to popular misguided cultural stereotypes and frequent parental misperceptions, we believe that the evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents."⁵

*Almost Christian: What The Faith Of Our Teenagers Is Telling The American Church*⁶ by Kenda Creasy Dean is the follow up to *Soul Searching* by Christian Smith. The author goes into more detail and spent time with teenagers who were part of the original survey from the (NSYR). Her findings confirmed the importance of the parents

² Christian Smith, with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

³ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 260.

⁴ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 260.

⁵ Smith, *Soul Searching*, 261.

⁶ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What The Faith Of Our Teenagers Is Telling The American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

teaching their children. In fact, number two of five major findings from the surveys is; “Most U.S. teenagers mirror their parents’ religious faith.”⁷ Also, the author writes, “Parents matter most when it comes to the religious formation of their children. While grandparents, other relatives, mentors and youth ministers are also influential, parents are by far the most important predictors of teenagers’ religious lives.”⁸

Chapter six of this book explains in greater detail the importance of the parents’ faith to a teenager’s faith. “The best way to get most youth more involved in and serious about their faith communities is to get their parents more involved in and serious about their faith communities.”⁹

Also, studies indicate that there is not much difference between Christian parenting and secular parenting. This all comes down to a Biblical Worldview. More and more of the worldview of Christians has become similar to the secular worldview. Christians are not living out the Gospel of Christ. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of self have become the same to many Christian parents. Barna elaborates,

Most of the people who claim to have a biblical worldview show little evidence of such a perspective in their core attitudes, behaviors and religious beliefs. The data show that churches can have a very significant impact on the worldview of people, but they must start with an intentional process introduced to people at a very young age. Waiting until someone is in their teens or young adult years misses the window of opportunity. Clearly, more churches need to invest resources in such training.¹⁰

For years we have reported research findings showing that born again adults think and behave very much like everyone else. It often seems that their faith

⁷ Dean, *Almost Christian*, 18.

⁸ Dean, *Almost Christian*, 18.

⁹ Dean, *Almost Christian*, 109.

¹⁰ George Barna, “Teens Evaluate The Church Based Ministry They Received As Children,” <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/124> [accessed February 8, 2010].

makes very little difference in their life. This new study helps explain why that is: believers do not train their children to think or act any differently. When our kids are exposed to the same influences, without much supervision, and are generally not guided to interpret their circumstances and opportunities in light of biblical principles, it's no wonder that they grow up to be just as involved in gambling, adultery, divorce, cohabitation, excessive drinking and other unbiblical behaviors as everyone else. What we build into a child's life prior to the age of 13 represents the moral and spiritual foundation that defines them as individuals and directs their choices for the remainder of their life. Garbage in, garbage out; there's no magic that suddenly changes the young person from what they were trained to be in their formative years into a model Christian once they get older.

¹¹

Many parents today look at the world's standard of parenting and not God's standards. What is the difference between the two? The world's standard is based on the standard of the personal view of life. What one can see and do as they look at the world around them. This is the view that views success based on wealth, power and status or convenience. It is a worldview that has self on the center stage.

God's view of living and being in complete obedience to His ways are separate from the world's standards. God's way is to listen to His ways through prayer and through the Bible and living a life in complete surrender to Him. The world's view is in complete contrast with God's view of servanthood and putting others first. A Biblical Worldview has Jesus on the throne of one's life and all decisions are based on the kingdom of God.

A parent cannot teach what they do not live by. Children can pick up on a lifestyle if it is consistent with what is being taught. Barna maintains, "In addition to making parenting a 24/7 priority, we found that parents must have an authentic and

¹¹ George Barna, "Parents Describe How They Raise Their Children," <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/184> [accessed February 8, 2010].

vibrant faith in order to provide meaningful spiritual guidance to their children. Children rarely embrace spiritual principles and practices that their parents fail to demonstrate in their lifestyle.”¹² Having an authentic, personal, growing and love relationship with Jesus as a parent is imperative to discipling children.

Parents have an important window of time in regards to discipling their children. Proverbs 22:6 states “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” Barna, in his research, found the following:

The significance of focusing on the development of children is underscored by findings showing that the moral foundations of children are typically solidified by the age of nine, that lifelong spiritual choices regarding one’s faith and one’s relationship with Jesus Christ are generally made before they reach age 13, and that a person’s religious beliefs are usually worked out prior to becoming a teenager - and that those beliefs rarely change to any meaningful degree after age 13.¹³

If parents do not take the initiative in discipling their children, there is a willing culture that will teach our children in our place.

From my preliminary research I agree with Barna as he lists these five reasons why parents do not do well in discipling their children:

The survey data indicate that parents generally rely upon their church to do all of the religious training their children will receive. Parents are not so much unwilling to provide more substantive training to their children as they are ill-equipped to do such work. According to the research, parents typically have no plan for the spiritual development of their children; do not consider it a priority, have little or no training in how to nurture a child’s faith, have no related

¹² George Barna, “Americans Not Concerned About Their Spiritual Condition,” <http://www.barna.org/faith-spirituality-articles/98> [accessed February 8, 2010].

¹³ George Barna, “Spiritual Progress Hard Find In 2003,” <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/132> [accessed February 8, 2010].

standards or goals that they are seeking to satisfy, and experience no accountability for their efforts.¹⁴

Why don't Parents disciple their children?

1. They have no plan for the spiritual development of their children.
2. Parents do not consider it a priority.
3. Parents have little or no training in how to nurture a child's faith.
4. Parents have no set standard or goals they are trying to reach.
5. Parents experience no accountability for their efforts.¹⁵

The first reason this problem exists is parents have no plan for the spiritual development of their children. Parents are not intentional and do not take an active role in their child's spiritual development. However, when it comes to education, college and sports parents sometimes seem to have more intentionality. In a world of specialization and more confirmed roles in the workplace parents are letting the experts do this for them.

I remember watching major league baseball in the early seventies. The starting pitcher would start the game with every intention of finishing the game. Sometimes there would be a closer who would finish the game in the later innings. However, today when I watch a game there are many specialized relief pitchers coming into the game

¹⁴George Barna, "Parents Accept Responsibility For Their Childs Development But Struggle With Effectiveness," <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/120> [accessed February 8, 2010].

¹⁵George Barna, "Parents Accept Responsibility For Their Childs Development But Struggle With Effectiveness," <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/120> [accessed February 8, 2010].

for a specific batter, out, or situation. It is not uncommon today to see seven to eight pitchers in a game when at one time two would have been the norm.

Parents too are getting relievers to disciple their children. They think the teacher, youth pastor, coach or some other specialist is in better shape for this most important task. Parents never experienced discipling in the home either – they were sent to Sunday school for spiritual education just the same as parents send their kids to school for math and other subjects. The parent's parents relied on specialists and so the parents don't know any other way.

The second reason why parents don't disciple their children is parents do not consider it a priority. The question must be asked; what is God's priority for parents? Here is the crux of this discussion of "The Great Commission to Parents: Discipling Our Children." So, if God commands us to be the major influence in spiritual development and parents are living in disobedience to God's ways what is the end result? This is why we are seeing the devastation of our children and society.

What appears to be the priority in regards to raising children is the path of least resistance. Parents are willing to have the culture of television violence and video games raise their children versus doing it themselves. They do not admit it but this is the culture they have placed their children in with little or no supervision. In reality they are allowing the mindset of secular humanism indoctrinate the minds of their children. Then when problems arise in their children they wonder what happened. Also, as in the lives of children, parents succumb to peer pressure. Parents see their friends caught in the

cultural traditions and do not want to be considered going against the flow of the established norms or behind the others.

A third reason why parents do not disciple their children is they have little or no training in how to nurture a child's faith. Why would parents not have the training to nurture their child's faith? I believe there are several reasons. First, the church has not made this a major part of the focus of the church, not only in regards to children but basic training at all levels. Second, the parents have not seen the disciple process in action so they are not aware of the importance of discipling. Third, the parents just don't see the need for this most important command.

The fourth reason parents do not disciple their children is parents have no set standard or goal they are trying to reach. The issue of intentionality is a factor here. Parents may have good intentions but just don't make the effort because they are not important to them. This is so radical to me. What parent would not want their child or children to be with them in eternity? Why would education or a sporting event be more important than the children's relationship with God? Note: I am talking about Christians here not secular humanists! I have seen parent after parent have their kids go through confirmation during their seventh grade year. This was their only goal. Parents would have their children confirmed in the church and then I would never see them again in church. These parents somehow feel they had completed their job in raising their children spiritually.

The fifth reason why parents do not disciple their children would be that parents experience no accountability for their efforts. It doesn't take a village to raise a child

but it does take accountability on the parent's part to keep them engaged and encouraged. How wonderful would it be to have parents encouraging one another to disciple their children.

Every aspect of society is affected by the lack of children being disciplined in their home. Drug use, teenage pregnancy, violence, and school dropout rates are all factors that can be traced to a lack of parental attention to their children.

The largest factor of this problem's existence is disobedience to God's Great Commission/Commandments. Since the church is not being the salt and light of the earth, (Matthew 5:16) the culture and the evil in the culture is going unchecked but not unnoticed.

First, where is the problem most prominent? The problem is the world's. However, central to this is disobedience to God's commandments. Christian parents know they should turn over every aspect of life to Jesus. However, as already indicated, most Christians have the same worldview as secular people.

Secondly, where is the Church in reference to this problem? The church is right in the middle of this problem. The church is on the front lines of this battle. In fact, this problem exists because most churches have no discipleship teaching or models.

Parents need to be trained at every level in the church. The church will be stronger and the light to the world as God intended. The church needs to be the change agent to culture. The church needs to take its God-given leadership position for the sake of Jesus and the world. May God forgive us for letting a pagan society dictate what we do and don't do.

In other words, the church appears to be silent in reference to this problem. I am taking the church as a whole and overall view not as individual churches. The church has seemed to be happy with any type of growth. Spiritual growth doesn't seem to be the passion or heartbeat of many churches. Disobedience to God's way has negative results not only to the household of God but also the local community.

When a church is active and intentional in the Great Commission it spreads through the church like yeast. Every aspect of the church is positively impacted. When a church discipled those in the church it impacts the life of the children's ministry, youth ministry, young adult ministry and all ages above these ages. Yes, even the youth group is impacted because the parents are now actively involved with the discipleship process of their youth and in return will invest in the life of the youth group:

Several Barna studies pointed out that most Christian churches evaluate success in terms of program attendance, child satisfaction and parental satisfaction, but do little to examine individual spiritual advancement. However, the ministries having the greatest success at seeing young people emerge into mature Christians, rather than contented church-goers, are those that facilitate a parent-church partnership focused on instilling specific spiritual beliefs and practices in a child's life from a very early age. **Sadly, less than one out of every five churches has produced such a ministry.**¹⁶ (emphasis mine)

Research Questions

There are four research questions I will address in this study regarding the Great Commission to parents and discipling their children.

RQ 1 What principles of *The Master Plan of Evangelism* can help parents disciple their children?

¹⁶ George Barna, "Research Shows That Spiritual Maturity Process Should Start At A young Age," <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/130> [accessed February 8, 2010].

RQ 2 What are some Biblical principles to help parents raise their children?

RQ 3 What resources are there for parents who want to disciple their children according to Biblical principles?

RQ 4 How can the church help train parents to disciple their children?

RQ 1 What principles of the Master Plan of Evangelism can help parents disciple their children?

Robert Coleman's book *The Master Plan of Evangelism* discusses the Biblical approach Jesus used to disciple his disciples. The principles of this book on discipleship are timeless and I will apply them to parents and discipling their children. Since the methods are the same methods Jesus used to spread the Gospel throughout the world it will be a helpful reference for parents. I know of no other book besides the Bible that explores the Biblical model that Jesus implemented when the word became flesh. The patterns used by Jesus can be used by parents.

I will take the eight principles described in the book; selection, association, consecration, impartation, demonstration, delegation, supervision and reproduction and place them in the context of parents discipling their children.

RQ 2 What are some Biblical principles to help parents raise their children?

It appears culture has taken the place of God for making decisions. What the world says is important seems to effect the way we live and raise our children in place of what God has to say about the manner.

Let me illustrate. Our family loves to make bonfires. Our oldest boy is deeply committed to wild life and would not hurt a bug. Before we put on a log we check it for

bugs so we will not burn any creatures. We also put it close to the fire before putting it on the fire so the bugs can feel the heat and vacate the log. One log we went through this proper protocol to warn any bugs inhabiting the log. One end of the log caught on fire and burned about half way to the other end. Smoke was bellowing out of the log from both ends. Then we saw hundreds of ants running out of the log. Then we saw some more ants caring out the larva (eggs) from the burning log. We quickly removed the log from the fire, and threw water on the log to try to save this ant colony.

Parents see and experience the upside down way most parents are raising their children. Warning signs are all around us. We sense our homes are getting hot and uncomfortable. Children are growing up with hate and hurts and no way to deal with these hurts. Parents are not taking the warning and leaving the lifestyle they are in. Like the ants in the burning log, they have experienced the warnings to flee their lifestyle. Many parents wait too long and it affects their children and a whole generation. God is warning us and showing the results of the secular culture values but far too few are listening.

RQ 3 What resources are there for parents who want to disciple their children according to Biblical principles?

I will provide list of available resource for parents who would like to disciple their children. Also, I will develop my own resources based on my research.

RQ 4 How can the church help train parents to disciple their children?

The Church is the body of Christ on the earth. We are the representative of Jesus to our community. We are called to reach the entire world for the cause of Christ. Just think of the implications and impact a church would have on a community who took discipling seriously! Entire communities would be transformed. Of course, this all takes time to get working in a church and community.

Parents would be more active in the life of the church and not have the professionals do all the spiritual development. Here again entire communities would be transformed.

Thesis

The purpose of this study is to encourage parents to disciple their children in the life-style approach Jesus used with His disciples.

This project will show that parents are the first choice to disciple their children. Teachers, coaches, Sunday school teachers, youth group leaders have an important supportive role in the development of children they are not the primary influence from the perspective of the Bible. I will show this from the Old Testament view of training children and from the New Testament and the Great Commission.

I will defend that the church does also has its place in the discipling of our children, however it should be in a secondary role. There are some parents who are either absent due to choice or circumstances beyond their control. So there is a major role for the church in general to fill in the gap left by parents. However, this is not the first choice in God's kingdom.

Research Setting

In chapter one of this study I addressed the problem and the setting along with the research questions I will be addressing.

This study addresses the issue of parents taking an active and initiating role in raising their children with the desired goal of developing them into lifelong, active disciples of Jesus Christ. As parents we have a short and closing window to take an active role in discipling our children.

In the introduction of Voddie Baucham's book; *Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God*¹⁷ indicates that between 70% and 88% of Christian teens are leaving the church after their first year of college.

Parents have the command of God to raise their children and teach them God's kingdom and rule (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Proverbs 22:7). Many Christian parents do not know how to train their children.

This issue will be addressed in the context of the local church where I serve as pastor, New Community Church in St. Marys, Ohio. This church plant began in 2000 as a part of the Missionary denomination. However, I hope this project will have further useful applications to the church at large.

¹⁷ Voddie T. Baucham, Jr., *Family Driven Faith: Doing What it Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007).

What I expect to see happen and why.

Teaching and discipling parents in order to have them disciple their children will help the church as a whole to become a discipling church. Modeling and teaching discipleship with the children as the receptors of the ministry will help grow a healthy youth group which will contribute to a healthy church. For those in the church who do not have children they will be saturated with the disciple-making methods and see firsthand what discipleship is all about.

Starting with the parents and discipleship is a good entry way into discipleship for the entire church. In my experience, most churches do not practice or understand the Biblical concept of discipleship. I expect to see discipling groups spring up in the church at all levels. I believe the Holy Spirit will honor the obedience to His will and way. Yes, I am aware that this will take a lot of time and focused concentrated effort.

I also expect some life changing commitments of parents to their children. As I teach and share with parents it will lead them to take a more Biblical approach to parenting. The long term implications to a church and community will be life altering!

My assumption is that many parents are not active in discipling their children. Many parents take the path of least resistance when it comes to discipling their children. I think most parents want to disciple their children; however, they do not plan and are not intentional about this most important task. After some classes and applications of the material I believe God will use this to show them the importance and impact parents have on their children spiritually. Also, I think parents will not be as

passive in their discipleship with their children. My hope is to get a network of parents who will support each other.

Methodology

What am I trying to measure? I will be using the Likert scaling method for my study. I will be trying to measure if my assumption that a Christian parent wants to disciple their children, they just do not have any good examples and training in this area. I will give a Likert survey to about twenty Christians in the community. I will give them an initial survey before my class on discipleship and parenting. After the class I will give them the same survey and interpret the results from the data collected.

The parameters of this project will be in the context of the local church. Focus will be on what parents are looking for in regards to direction in parenting and discipleship. A parent cannot teach what they do not know. This is going to be a real issue in this project.

Theological Framework

Chapter 2 of this project will be the Theological Framework:

The Great Commission is Jesus' command to all Christians. I believe the nations starts within our homes with our family. We are called to make disciples of our children. We start with those with in our homes.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey

everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

Jesus states welcoming a child is the same as welcoming him. I believe Jesus is talking about all children, especially our own flesh and blood. He also warns about misleading children and causing them to sin. This puts a tremendous responsibility and privilege on parents. "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matthew 18:5-6).

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 paints a clear picture of the importance of the parent and child relationship in regards to training in the things of God. We are to disciple our children in the context of life. Life-style discipleship is a clear commandment from God's Word:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

The Bible tells us we are to train our children on the way they are to go. The training is not to be left up to others. Other options are available but under the direction of the parent. Here is a wonderful principle from God and the relationship parents have with their children in regards to their training. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it."

Here is a warning in regards to what happens when fathers do not have their hearts on their children. Could we be in a time of this land of ours being in a curse do to the way our nation has abandoned the Biblical principles of parenting? “See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse” (Malachi 4:5-6).

Children are a reward from God. God is in the house building business! God will help us in the task of discipleship:

Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat — for he grants sleep to those he loves. Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. (Psalms 127:1-5)

Parents are to fear the Lord and serve Him in faithfulness. People like Joshua and others in the Bible are great examples of fear and faithfulness as families serve the Lord together:

Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD. (Joshua 24:14-15)

Literature Review

Chapter 3 of this project will be the Literature Review:

In Chapter three I will summarize the latest literature on discipleship and parenting. George Barna has done a lot of good research on this topic. I will be

reviewing such authors as, Voddie Baucham, Stormie Omartian, Robert E. Coleman and Andreas J. Kostenberger. I will also include other resources that I come in contact with during the research.

I have researched some Doctoral Theses and have not come across anything like what I am researching. There is a lot of research on parenting and on discipleship but not on parents and discipleship. I also have done a preliminary search on books and have concluded the same thing. I have used the seminary resources and cross referenced the topic and think what I have picked will be good.

Project Design

Chapter 4 of this project will be the Project Design:

I will have a group of parents in the church with young children. First, I will have them complete a Likert survey, (pre-test) to see of the current importance they place on discipling their own children. Secondly, I will have four classes with them teaching them the themes outlined in this study (course). I will focus on the themes of *The Master Plan of Evangelism* taking the eight principles discussed in Dr. Coleman's book and relating them to parenting/discipleship. As discussed in the book *The Master Plan of Evangelism* is a book on discipleship. Thirdly, I will give them a (post-test) after the classes to see what impact the class had on them. Finally, in chapter five of this thesis project I will describe the outcome of the class and surveys.

Outcomes

Chapter 5 of this project will be the Outcomes:

The end result would be to help parents see the importance of discipling their children in our church and to see this is the normal way and lifestyle of the Christian parent. Also, I would like to start small groups in our church and have to have this project the start of small groups. These small groups would also help the parents have accountability and support as they intentionally disciple their children.

I believe when you get Christians together in a setting of mutual support and accountability it will help them continue the discipling process. This will also help launch our small groups in the church.

CHAPTER 2

THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In Chapter two of this thesis, *The Great Commission to Parents: Discipling our Children*, I will examine seven key Scripture texts as they deal with the Great Commission, discipleship and parenting. These seven Scriptural passages will provide the theological framework for this thesis.

- 1) Theology of the Great Commission.
- 2) Theology of humility and admonition in discipleship.
- 3) Theology of life-style discipleship.
- 4) Theology of parental training of children.
- 5) Theology of admonition to keep the hearts of our children.
- 6) Theology of God's Provisions.
- 7) Theology of family service to God.

Theology of the Great Commission

The Great Commission is Jesus' command to all Christians. I believe the nations mentioned in this Scripture starts within our homes with our own families. We are called to make disciples of our children. We start with those with in our homes:

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20)

The scope of this commission is for all nations, all people groups. So the ending is clear, meaning every person is to have an invitation to become a disciple of Jesus.

However, the beginning is not as clear as the ending. So where does the Great Commission start? The Greek word for nations is *ethnee*.¹ According to Thayer's Greek Lexicon the definition for *ethnee* is a multitude associated or living together: a company, troop, swarm.² If we put the word "all" in front of nations we would have the beginning of verse 19 read something like this: "Therefore, go and make disciples of all multitudes associated or living together." I believe the Great Commission and all nations start with those we live with or live together with. We are not obedient to the Great Commission if we by-pass those whom we live with. As we will see later in this section the discipleship process is in a day to day lifestyle.

The Message is a paraphrase of the New Testament and its translation of Matthew 28:19 is helpful in showing the importance of discipling those who are in own homes first. Here is the translation from the Message, "Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life...,"³

We will on most days spend time with our family members who live in our homes. This surely would include our children and spouse. If we are not discipling our family members we most likely are not discipling any other people either. Discipling begins in our own homes. What could be more instructive, productive and a greater

¹ *Interlinear Transliterated Bible*, Electronic Database (Biblesoft, Inc. 2003).

² *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*, Electronic Database (Biblesoft, Inc. 2003).

³ Eugene Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* Electronic Database (Biblesoft, Inc. 2003).

investment of your time than to start at your home teaching those you see each day all of the details of the Great Commission?

Theology of humility and admonition in discipleship

Jesus states welcoming a child is the same as welcoming him. I believe Jesus is talking about all children, especially our own flesh and blood. He also warns about misleading children and causing them to sin. This puts a tremendous responsibility and privilege on parents. "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matthew 18:5-6).

William Barclay in his commentary on Matthew⁴ makes some powerful observations about the two verses in Matthew above. His words are helpful in our discussion of humility in the discipleship process. Even though providing for basic needs of a child is not glamorous, these day to day events are important for the furthering of God's kingdom. Barclay writes,

To satisfy the physical needs of a child, to wash his clothes and bind his cuts and soothe his bruises and cook his meals may often seem a very unromantic task; the cooker and the sink and the work-basket have not much glamour; but there is no one in all this world who helps Jesus Christ more than a teacher of the little child and the harassed, hard pressed mother in the home. All such will find glory in the grey, if in the child they sometimes glimpse none other than Jesus himself.⁵

⁴ William Barclay, *The Gospel Of Matthew Vol. 2, 2nd ed.* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press 1958) Chapters 11-28.

⁵ William Barclay, *The Gospel Of Mathew*, 178.

One of the greatest lessons I learned in Seminary is the concept of CIE (Context Is Everything). So here is the context of what we have read above in verses five and six of Jesus' teachings. Matthew 18:1 says, 'At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

What was going through the minds of the disciples at this moment? It appears they are thinking about who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. They just witnessed Jesus paying taxes by catching a fish that Jesus instructed them to go catch. The disciples' minds were starting to open up about who Jesus is. So Jesus is getting ready to do some life-style discipleship and teach the disciples an important life lesson.

The disciples were starting to see the power and authority Jesus had. The disciples in their human nature turned to their own position as a disciple of Jesus. Jesus took a child and used this moment as a time of teaching about His kingdom. The following is a quote from Matthew Henry's Commentary:

He set him in the midst of them; not that they might play with him, but that they might learn by him. Grown men, and great men, should not disdain the company of little children, or think it below them to take notice of them. They may either speak to them, and give instruction to them; or look upon them, and receive instruction from them. Christ himself, when a child, was in the midst of the doctors (Luke 2:46).⁶

Discipleship is not flashy or in the spotlight but it is what Jesus teaches. This passage in Matthew also displays a great warning on causing them to sin. If we do not disciple our children do we in essence cause them to sin?

⁶ *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition*, Electronic Database. (Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1991).

In Matthew 18:5, Jesus states, "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me." This is a clear call for us to disciple our children. When we welcome children, and our children are truly implied in these words of Jesus, we welcome Jesus. As Christians when Jesus makes a statement of a condition of welcoming Jesus into our lives we all need to stop what we are doing and consider this wonderful promise from Jesus.

Why would welcoming a little child welcome Jesus? I believe it comes down to what Jesus is teaching in this setting; the importance of humility. Children for the most part are humble. They do not own anything except by way of their parents. They don't have any worldly possessions to give (except by inheritance).

So welcoming a child is an act of humility and giving back to a person who cannot give anything back. Of course, I am speaking in terms of physical and material "stuff". Children give love and joy to us without even realizing it. So I see Jesus telling his disciples to welcome them not for what you are going to get out of it, but what you are doing for them. Forget, who will be first, and welcome children into your life.

Jesus goes from telling the disciples of the wonderful blessing of welcoming a child to a sharp contrast and a warning. There is word that starts Jesus' next sentence and this word is "but". There is a major contrast that Jesus is getting ready to inform his disciples about. Jesus tells his disciples "if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin..." (Mark 9:42).

What would cause a believing child to sin? One sure way would be to abandoning children and letting the world raise your children; also, letting the sinful

world have direct influence with no check points and balances on your child. For example, I spoke to a youth pastor in regards to being more focused in teaching the children of the church Biblical teachings of Jesus. His comment almost knocked me out of my chair. He said if a child can be talked into something another person can talk them out of it so we should not teach the Bible to them.

I truly to this day have no idea where this mindset comes from. There is a whole pagan world who feels very comfortable in telling our children how they think they should live and are quite successful at it.

The following words from Adam Clarke are useful in regards to the danger of letting your children run free in the world and not teaching them God's ways:

A most injurious and destructive maxim has lately been advanced by a few individuals which it is to be hoped is disowned by the class of Christians to which they belong, though the authors affect to be thought Christians, and rational ones, too; the sum of the maxim is this: "Children ought not to be taught religion for fear of having their minds biased to some particular creed, but they should be left to themselves till they are capable of making a choice, and choose to make one." This maxim is in flat opposition to the command of God, and those who teach it show how little they are affected by the religion they profess. If they felt it to be good for anything, they would certainly wish their children to possess it; but they do not teach religion to their children, because they feel it to be of no use to themselves. Now the Christian religion properly applied saves the soul, and fills the heart with love to God and man; for the love of God is shed abroad in the heart of a genuine believer, by the Holy Ghost given to him.

These persons have no such love, because they have not the religion that inspires it; and the spurious religion which admits of the maxim above mentioned, is not the religion of God, and consequently better untaught than taught. But what can be said to those parents who, possessing a better faith, equally neglect the instruction of their children in the things of God! They are highly criminal; and if their children perish through neglect, which is very probable, what a dreadful account must they give in the great day!⁷

⁷ Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database (Biblesoft, Inc. 2003).

Jesus warns the disciples about causing a child who believes in him to sin saying, “it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” Please note here Jesus is talking about believing children in this context. How important is it to Jesus that these children grow in relationship to him?

Theology of life-style discipleship

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 paints a clear picture of the importance of the parent and child relationship in regards to training in the things of God. We are to disciple our children in the context of life. Life-style discipleship is a clear commandment from God’s Word:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

These verse shows that parental discipleship is not just a New Testament idea. When we take these verses together they are talking about life-style discipleship.

These verses are known as the Shema. Shema is the Hebrew word for “Hear”.⁸ The Shema is now the confession of faith for the Jewish people. How important is this portion of Scripture to the teachings of Jesus? In two of the four Gospels Jesus quotes verse five when asked what was the greatest commandment. Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This

⁸ Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, Unabridged, Electronic Database (Biblesoft, Inc. 2003).

is the first and greatest commandment.” (Matthew 22: 37-38) as well as “The most important one, answered Jesus, is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength'" (Mark 12:29-30).

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus does not quote Deuteronomy 6:5 as in Matthew and in Mark. However, an expert of the law did quote it in regards to his question to Jesus when the expert in the law asked Jesus what he must do to inherit everlasting life. The expert in the law quoted Deuteronomy 6:5. Jesus does however affirm the expert's answer when Jesus says, "You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live" (Luke 10:28).

Jesus validates the Old Testament Scripture when He calls it the most important commandment to live by. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus even makes it a point of eternal life.

As indicated previously there is an extreme importance to all contexts in the Bible. Jesus validates these Scriptures and the importance of these Scriptures in three out of the four Gospels. Verses six through nine indicate the importance of discipleship to our children.

Verses six through nine are a blueprint of how to live out verses four and five. Also, these commandments are from God, confirmed by Jesus, and give us clear teaching of how and what we should teach our children.

For example, as indicated in chapter one of this project, parents cannot teach what they do not know. Children will not follow just words from parents, the parents

must live and breathe their commitment to God. Deuteronomy 6:6 states, “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.” What are these commandments that should be upon our hearts? They are the commandments of verses 4 and 5. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

Verses four and five tell us what God’s commandments are. After living them out in everyday situations and obeying them and making them a part of your heart and lifestyle then verse seven is ready to be taught to your children. Deuteronomy 6:7 tells us to “impress them on your children.”

Once again, Adam Clarke has some helpful insights to this text:

[Thou shalt teach them diligently] *shinantaam*, from *shaanan*, to repeat, iterate, or do a thing again and again; hence, to whet or sharpen any instrument, which is done by reiterated friction or grinding. We see here the spirit of this divine injunction. God's testimonies must be taught to our children, and the utmost diligence must be used to make them understand them. This is a most difficult task; and it requires much patience, much prudence, much judgment, and much piety in the parents, to enable them to do this good, this most important work, in the best and most effectual manner.⁹

It is clear that teaching our children is not just a one time teaching. Like sharpening a knife, teaching our children is a continuous process that takes deliberate time and focus. Sharpening a knife is a benefit in the long run for productivity. In like manner, we are called to sharpen our children for life-long production for their relationship with God.

⁹ Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database (Biblesoft, Inc. 2003).

I know many parents who have come back to the faith of Jesus because they have had children. They did not have any foundation to impress on their children so they came back to church and started seeking God in a new and desperate way. For many parents, having children is a second chance to starting again or building their relationship with God. Becoming parents causes people to realize there is more to life than yourself. There is an eternal dimension to life now. However, we cannot impress on our children if these commandments are not impressed upon our hearts and lives. I like the wording in the Message and how verse six connects with verse seven. "Write these commandments that I've given you today on your hearts. Get them inside of you and then get them inside your children" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

The last part of verse seven communicates how we can "get them inside your children." I believe this is one of the greatest supports for discipling our children in the Bible. "Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:7).

First, "talk about them when you sit at home." The opportunities we have at home while we are sitting down are an important part of the training for our children. Some of the best times when the family is together and sitting down is meal time. Another good time of sitting down with the family is while at rest. Playing games or just being with your children in the quietness of the moment is a good time to talk about these commandments and loving God.

Second, "when you walk along the road." The modern day equivalent would be "when you drive in your car." A great time to teach your children is drive time. I cringe

when I am driving with my family at night and I see four television sets in a mini-van or crossover and all family members glued to the sets. (sometimes even the driver is watching the television). Driving in a car is a good time to communicate with your children.

Lastly, “when you lie down and when you get up.” We should begin our day with God and end our day with God, and every minute between the two. Before the family goes to bed is a good time to focus on God’s love through prayer and other acts of remembering God.

In her book *Almost Christian; What The Faith Of Our Teenagers Is Telling The American Church* by Kenda Creasy Dean confirms the importance of life-style discipleship with her comments on this passage from Deuteronomy:

Note what the Deuteronomist is actually saying here. Parents are not called to make their children godly; teenagers are created in God’s image, no matter what we do to them, and no matter what they do to disguise it. The law called upon Jewish parents to show their children godliness-to teach them, talk to them, embody for them their own delight in the Lord, 24/7. Everything they needed for their children’s faith formation, God had already given them. In the end, awakening faith does not depend on how hard we press young people to love God, but on how much we show them that we do.¹⁰

In Summary, these Bible verses show us in detail what is called life-style discipleship. In life-style discipleship a parent is living life together with their children, eating, traveling, playing, resting with a focus of teaching about God’s love in life’s context. Jesus did this when he walked the earth with his disciples. He taught them in the context of life. When an experience called for a teaching he would teach in the

¹⁰ Kenda Creasy Dean , *Almost Christian: What The Faith Of Our Teenagers Is Telling The American Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 119-120.

context of the moment. As parents we would be wise to do the same in the context of our children's lives. May we turn off the television and communicate with our children

God has given us:

PARENTS, hear what the Lord saith unto you: Ye shall diligently teach your children that there is one Lord, Yahweh, Elohim; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost: and that they must love him with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their might. And as children are heedless, apt to forget, liable to be carried away by sensible things, repeat and re-repeat the instruction, and add line upon line, precept upon precept here a little and there a little, carefully studying time, place, and circumstances, that your labour be not in vain: show it in its amiableness, excite attention by exciting interest; show how good, how useful, how blessed, how ennobling, how glorious it is. Whet these things on their hearts till the keenest edge is raised on the strongest desire, till they can say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth I desire besides thee!"¹¹

Theology of parental training of children

The Bible tells us we are to train our children the way they are to go. The training is not to be left up to others. Other options are available but under the direction of the parent. Here is a wonderful principle from God and the relationship parents have with their children in regards to their training. "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

This verse starts with a command; (train up a child in the way he should go) followed by a wonderful promise or reward; (and when he is old he will not turn from it). Parents have a window of opportunity to train a child that closes quickly. The wise parent will take every opportunity to train their children or as indicated above there is a willing culture to train them in the ways of the world not in the ways of the Lord.

¹¹ *Adam Clarke's Commentary*, Electronic Database (Biblesoft, Inc. 2003).

The Hebrew word for train (*chanok*) means to initiate or dedicate. As Adam

Clarke states:

Chanok, which we translate train up or initiate, signifies also dedicate; and is often used for the consecrating anything, house, or person, to the service of God. Dedicate, therefore, in the first instance, your child to God; and nurse, teach, and discipline him as God's child, whom he has entrusted to your care. These things observed, and illustrated by your own conduct, the child (you have God's word for it) will never depart from the path of life.¹²

In Thomas C. Oden's book, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry*,¹³ he addresses Proverbs 22:6 by also stating the importance of parental teaching of their children. This book has been a constant source of encouragement and insights to all types of theological issues in my years of pastoral ministry. These two quotes are helpful in our discussion of parental training.

This is doubtless the most far-reaching and significant of all teaching contexts: the primary relation of parents and children. No teacher can quite match the importance of the rich gifts that parents can give children in spiritual foundations.¹⁴

Parents have both extraordinary influence and extraordinary responsibility in the religious education of their children. Not only may moral virtues be taught early, such as courage, honesty, prudence, compassion, and temperance, but also intellectual virtues, habits of consistency and of looking for good evidence, habits of order and precisions of thought. These are basic patterns that can be engendered more effectively by parents than anyone else.¹⁵

Herbert G. Livingston, in *The Pentateuch in its Cultural Environment*¹⁶ stresses the importance of the father-son relationship in the context of the Old Testament

¹² Adam Clarke's Commentary, Electronic Database (Biblesoft, Inc. 2003).

¹³ Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: HarperCollins, 1983).

¹⁴ Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 145.

¹⁵ Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 146.

¹⁶ Herbert G. Livingston, *The Pentateuch in its Cultural Environment* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House 1988).

covenant relationship. He also would agree from an Old Testament perspective the God given directive of parental instruction to their children as the primary source:

The father-son relationship was one of the early metaphors taken from personal and social life to describe the covenant between God and Israel or individuals. Authority was centered in the father, whereas the son was dependent upon the father for all that he possessed or whatever he would receive as a religious heritage.¹⁷

Theology of admonition to keep the hearts of our children

Here is a warning in regards to what happens when fathers do not have their hearts on their children. "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse" (Malachi 4:5-6).

One interesting point about these verses is they are the last verses in the Old Testament. The Old Testament starts out by saying, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The concluding words are a word of warning for fathers to turn their hearts towards their children, and for the children to do likewise. So, from the beginning of the Old Testament to the end of the Old Testament there is an obvious disconnect between God's intentions and reality.

The good news is God promised to send help for the parents to bring our hearts back to our children. God has given parents a fair warning and stressed the importance to have their hearts honed in on their children.

¹⁷ Livingston, *The Pentateuch in its Cultural Environment* 161.

The period between these last words of the Old Testament and the beginning of the book of Matthew is called the intertestamental period. I think these last words of the Old Testament would be a great warning to all parents today and to note these words are a bridge to the Gospel of Jesus.

These last verses in the Old Testament point to John the Baptist and his ministry as described in the following verses: “And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17).

How important is parenting to God? It is the first point mentioned as being a part of sending the spirit of Elijah and John the Baptist in the New Testament times. John the Baptist then prepared the way for Jesus to minister on the earth. Joyce G. Baldwin states this concept in these words:

The future ministry of the coming prophet is described in terms of bridging the generation gap. The fifth commandment implied that the home was essentially the school of the community. There, in a ‘world in miniature’, authority and submission, love and loyalty, obedience and trust could be learned as nowhere else and, with the word of God as guide in the home, society could be changed.¹⁸

Fathers and mothers, may we never miss the importance of having our hearts and our children’s heart in unison. May we never forget that Jesus is there to help us in this most important task.

¹⁸ Joyce G. Baldwin. *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1972.) 252.

Theology of God's Provisions

Children are a reward from God. God is in the house building business! God will help us in the task of discipleship:

Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat — for he grants sleep to those he loves. Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. (Psalms 127:1-5)

The chapter of Psalms is a clear teaching that all things come from God. I believe this means even our children come from God. Since our children come from God our children belong to God. As much as we love them and care for them, cry for them and pray for them, God loves them even more than we do.

There is a radical shift in our parenting and discipleship of our children when we realize God is the true parent of our children. Our Heavenly Father is more concerned with our children than we as earthly parents are. The good news is God is there to help us in this role as parents. We are not alone as we nurture and care for our children. When we look at our children and know God gave them to us and will help us raise them there is a peace that develops in our parenting ability. God will give us the wisdom and job to raise our children according to His ways. We are not alone in this journey of parenting. The God who created the universe can surely be responsible for our children. God gives us the honor and privilege of raising children.

I experienced God's love and grace before my wife and I had three boys. However, since becoming an earthly father my understanding and experience of God's love grew one hundred fold. Having a child who looks like you is a binding love that

cannot be expressed and to realize God is your heavenly Father and the heavenly Father of your children is a joy unspeakable.

My oldest son just passed his driver's test. I took him to get his license. On the way home he dropped me off at my office. I watched as he drove off alone in the car for the first time. I went back to my office knowing our relationship would change forever. Here is where I found my peace; I realized the days of driving him around to sporting events, musical events and all of those events were over. I would no longer be in the front seat of the car driving with him. Now he is able to drive by himself. My comfort is my son is not by himself.

God loves him, God will protect him on these crazy roads and life we all travel. We cannot always be with our children, they grow up, they start driving, they leave the home. However, my heavenly Father is my children's heavenly Father too. My heavenly Father never leaves me, He will never leave our children.

There should be a point in parents' lives when the realization that God cares more about your child than you do. With only the world's love this is a hard concept to grasp. However, I am not talking about the world's love, but about God's great love.

Overall, this Psalm is a reminder that all of life's securities are from God and not just because of hard work and personal abilities. The first two verses reveal the goodness of God in regards to our homes and daily living. More specifically, God builds our homes for shelter, protects our city, provides food, and grants us sleep. These items in verses one and two are the basic needs of living. "Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand

guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat — for he grants sleep to those he loves” (Psalms 127:1-2).

If we don’t realize these basic needs are from God we will not understand the last part of this Psalm that reveals to us our children our God’s reward from God. Yes, having three boys of our own there are moments where you would like to return the gift back to God. These are only fleeting moments.

For my wife and I, when our boys were babies (and even now) we go into our sons room and watch them sleep. They are so cute and precious. We still are in awe of the gift our children are to us. We know that only God could give such a gift to us. When we look at our children as a gift and not as something to do it changes our whole perspective on parenting: “Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them” (Psalm 127:3-5).

The *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*¹⁹ sums up this same concept of the importance of God’s provision and building of a strong healthy family by stating: “The concept of the necessity of dependence upon God is carried over into the building of a family (Genesis 3:20). A recognition that children are God’s gift is the basis for building a successful home. Joy and protection are pictured as the results of fruitfulness in the bearing and rearing of children.”²⁰

¹⁹ Charles F. Pfeiffer, and Everett Harrison., ed. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary Complete and Unabridged* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962).

²⁰ Pfeiffer and Harrison, ed. *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, 543.

Theology of family service to God

Parents are to fear the Lord and serve Him in faithfulness. People like Joshua and others in the Bible are great examples of fear and faithfulness as families serve the Lord together:

Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD. (Joshua 24:14-15)

The context of these verses is where Joshua is giving his farewell speech and reminding the people that it was God who gave them the promised land. He reminds Israel to, fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness.” He then reminds them of the bad decisions their parents and grandparents made. He reminds them of the current situation they are living in where the false gods of the Amorites are all around them.

Then some of Joshua’s most famous words are recorded, “But as for me and my Household, we will serve the Lord.” Note how his household is connected to his personal choice of serving the Lord. This now famous quote loses its luster if Joshua would have said in this assembly of all these people, “As for me, I will serve the Lord.” It does not have the depth and challenge as what he actually said.

In order for a family to be a family of God the parents need to be followers of God. The parents set the tone for the direction of the family. I personally know no greater joy than when I am serving God with my family. Like Joshua an entire community is watching to see us to see if the family is serving the Lord. When a family is faithful, it encourages other families to do the same.

In summary, this chapter shows that God is serious about parents teaching their children about God and His love. This teaching is done in the context of life. We are not called to bring in experts of the law to teach God's law. God's provision is important to discipling our children. God has given us children to raise and to serve God together.

God has given us very specific warnings about serving other gods and having our hearts connected to our children. In fact, it was so important it was the last word of warning in the Old Testament. It was the first thing that John The Baptist was to preach to the people to prepare the way for Jesus.

We are not left alone to disciple our children. They are not only our children but they are also God's children. In fact, parents are not the ones who love their children the most in the entire world. God loves them even more than we do. He has given parents the privilege to help raise His children. We have all the resources of heaven itself. We are not alone, we have the commandment of God to focus on our children.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

My thesis title is *The Great Commission to Parents: Discipling Your Children*. For this chapter I will discuss Discipleship, The Great Commission, Discipling Children and Parenting. Due to the major writings on all of the above topics, I have chosen authors who have excelled in their given area of expertise.

Even though there has been a lot of writing on the individual areas, little has been written in the area of discipling children. The one book that I thought focused most directly with both discipling and children was Barna's book called *Revolutionary Parenting*. He has combined years of research from various other surveys to come up with his conclusions. He surveyed young adults who would be considered as disciples while children and printed those findings along with their parent's input.¹

Also, I believe Dr. Robert Coleman is the most accomplished writer on discipleship and the Great Commission; therefore, I have included many of his books in my discussion.

Discipleship

I used *Disciplemaking: A Self-Study Course on Follow-up and Discipleship*² for leadership development with a discipleship group and a sermon series. I can say from a first-hand experience it is very effective to disciple other people. All of the chapters were good. I especially liked the beginning chapters because they covered the

¹George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting: What the Research Shows Really Works* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), xix-xxiii.

²Robert E. Coleman, *Disciplemaking: A Self-Study Course on Follow-up and Discipleship*, eds. Timothy Beougher and Tim Phillips (Wheaton, IL: Billy Graham Center, 1994).

foundations for the rest of the book. The wheel illustration has provided some long-term growth in many people. Also, reproduction is a key insight to discipling our children. This concept has been helpful as we develop our children to be leaders of leaders.

The Great Commission is unpacked in a careful and helpful way. Jesus' "destined union" with His disciples and with us helps keep our lives focused on Jesus' will. The book states, "As a Christian, one of the greatest thoughts you have is the final vision, that final union with Christ. Right? Then, let's help others who need to become a disciple of Christ; share that vision."³ As parents, spending eternity in heaven with our children should be all the incentive we need to disciple our children.

It appears to me many parents focus on making converts but not disciples. I agree our calling is to make disciples. Of course, conversion is the beginning and we cannot teach others what we are not. For example, I live in west-central Ohio. This is "Buckeye" territory. I happen to be a Michigan fan. Michigan and Ohio State are huge rivals. I cannot teach people how to be Buckeye fans with much credibility. In like manner, we must be a disciple of Jesus Christ and live in obedience to His will and ways before we can train our children.

Ministering like Jesus is like playing follow the leader. In order to follow you must be with the leader. The book talks about the radical change in the disciples' lives and how the power of the Holy Spirit completely turned these men around. They were a work in process—a process that allowed them to be like Jesus.

³ Coleman, *Disciplemaking*, 7.

A key Bible verse mentioned in the book and in the taped sermons (which are a part of this study) is 2 Timothy 2:1-2 (NIV), "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."

Teaching others to teach others is a foundational truth in all true discipleship. Imagine the implications and the multiplication when a family applies this concept to their parenting.

Unit Two explained follow-up with a new believer and its importance. The authors states, "Follow-up is initially the building of a relationship".⁴ This makes it very clear that lifestyle evangelism is a key to our witness. For parents, our most natural relationship is with our children. The wheel illustration was very helpful. The authors state, "Faith, the tire, absorbs the impact of life and bounces back as a tire under air pressure rebounds from obstacles in travel."⁵

The wheel illustration inspired some in the study to write a skit for a worship service. They rode bikes around the worship area, one with round wheels and one with misshapen wheels and talked about the balance achieved by the tire and spokes. This book will be a constant resource in my ministry. It was good to have others read and study it together. This book is a key tool to further God's kingdom in the realm of discipleship.

The Master Plan of Discipleship by Robert E Coleman is the follow-up to the book *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. The book takes a look at the book of Acts and how

⁴ Coleman, *Disciplemaking*, 65.

⁵ Coleman, *Disciplemaking*, 80.

discipleship was done by the early church. The chapter that spoke to my heart and met me where I am currently living is Chapter five, "The Discipline to Keep." It is a hard concept to grasp that pagan religions separate belief and conduct. I cannot imagine Jesus coming and teaching his disciples beliefs that did not result in a change of conduct. Robert Coleman states, also "In contrast, coming to Christ in the early church constituted an engagement of one's total personality and life-style."⁶

"The Way" is a natural name to label the followers of Jesus. In our present culture there doesn't appear to be much difference between followers of Jesus and non-believers. Of course, there are exceptions. However, what I see is people coming to church on a semi-regular basis because of recreation and children's activities. There is not a passion for the disciplines that Jesus taught and was evident in the churches of Acts. There isn't the need to share their life in a small group.

"The commitment expected in the church, thus, allowed for no reservations, no discharge from duty. One did not have to be smart or talented to enroll in Christ's mission, but one had to be faithful." Coleman also writes "...Renouncing the old patterns of self-exaltations was the choice made in repentance."⁷

I was excited to look at the churches in the book of Acts to see the possibilities of the church today and seeing Christians willing to die for the sake of Christ. Praying, fasting, daily Bible reading, small groups, fellowship, accountability and repentance

⁶ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan Of Discipleship* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1987), 99.

⁷ Coleman, *The Master Plan Of Discipleship*, 100.

were common. Coleman states "Genuine church growth and growing in the Word go together."⁸

"The Application Today" in chapter 5 was relevant. It states, "Strangely, today we hear little about self-denial and suffering in all the talk about church growth....

Unwittingly, I am afraid Christian discipleship has often been squeezed into the world's mold, so that prosperity and success are more cherished than radical obedience.... To see significant growth, more likely than not we will need to go beyond the easy-going, self-indulgent religious life of the West."⁹

This chapter summed up the issues of the struggling church today. It calls Jesus' disciples back to the basics of our faith. Though this book correctly describes the church of today it also described the church as Jesus intended it to be. Looking at the first century church gives us great hope and expectation of what the churches today can be.

The implications for discipling our children would be life changing to our children and culture. I believe when the church goes back to the commandments of Jesus, including Biblical discipleship, the church will break loose of cultural traditions.

The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert Coleman is one of the most helpful books I have read for discipleship. The step-by-step Biblical examples are helpful even two thousand years later. One major concept that the book stresses is that Jesus came to save the entire world not just a small section of society. Jesus invested his time with twelve men he selected. He didn't ignore the masses; however, the majority of his time was spent with the twelve who were teachable. They were from many walks of life.

⁸Coleman, *The Master Plan Of Discipleship*, 107.

⁹Coleman, *The Master Plan Of Discipleship*, 116-117.

School was always in session and the disciples saw Jesus in action on a daily basis.

Coleman believes, "A few people so dedicated in time will shake the world for God.

Victory is never won by the multitudes."¹⁰

Taking a person or several people and investing your life into them was Jesus' evangelism. Even though this takes a lot of time and energy with little results at first it is still the best method.

When some of his disciples couldn't take some of Jesus' deeper teaching and left him Jesus didn't go chasing after them. The books states, "He was training leaders for the Kingdom, and if they were going to be fit vessels of service, they were going to have to pay the price."¹¹

The author argues that "Jesus did not have the time nor the desire to scatter himself on those who wanted to make their own terms of discipleship".¹² Jesus was looking for those who loved Him and this love was manifested by obedience. The disciples were asked to give everything to the cause of Jesus and surrender everything to Jesus and let the Holy Spirit have every part of their lives. One of the best lines in the book is this, "We have not been called to hold the fort, but to storm the heights. It is in this light that the final step in Jesus' strategy of evangelism can be understood."¹³

Slowly Jesus gave the disciples ministry opportunities. Jesus was always there for follow up. One of Jesus' greatest joys was to see the disciples go out and be excited about the times they were obedient. Reproduction of those who will reproduce is our

¹⁰Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1978), 36.

¹¹ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 53.

¹² Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 53.

¹³ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 95.

goal. We have enough people standing on the sidelines waiting for somebody else to make things happen. I think the reason this book has impacted me so much is because the concepts scream out to do them. I have been challenged and changed.

This book by Robert Coleman is very helpful in the process of discipling our children. The author looked at Jesus' interaction with his twelve disciples and pulled out eight major focus areas on how Jesus disciplined. Here are those eight concepts; selection, association, consecration, impartation, demonstration, delegation, supervision and reproduction. I will summarize those points below.

First is selection. His concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes, but with men whom the multitudes would follow. Jesus needed leaders who would lead the church after He went to heaven. They were common and ordinary men but willing to be taught by Jesus. "One cannot transform a world except as individuals in the world are transformed, and individuals cannot be changed except as they are molded in the hands of the Master."¹⁴

As parents our selection process is very easy. God selects them as your children. As I presented the idea for my thesis project to our cohort class, I mentioned this would be a hard principle to uphold. Dr. Coleman laughed and said, "it was the easiest due to God's intervention."

Second, is the concept of association. Jesus stayed with them. He just let the disciples follow him. Jesus taught his disciples to grow close to himself. School was always in session and his curriculum was to reveal himself to the disciples. The author

¹⁴Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 29-30.

writes, "In fact, this personal appointment to be in constant association with him was as much a part of their ordination commission as the authority to evangelize. Indeed, it was for the moment even more important, for it was the necessary preparation for the other."¹⁵

The lessons Jesus used to disciple His disciples are a perfect fit for parents as they look at discipling their children. "They were his spiritual children (Mark 10:24, John 13:33, 21:5) and the only way that a father can properly raise a family is to be with it."¹⁶

Third is consecration. Jesus expected total obedience. Jesus did not go chasing after people who were not committed. His disciples had to be obedient to him. "Jesus did not have the time nor the desire to scatter himself on those who wanted to make their own terms of discipleship."¹⁷

Fourth is impartation. Impartation is to be filled with the presence of Jesus with the Holy Spirit. To do the work of Jesus, He must be not only with us but in us. As mentioned in chapter one of this thesis, a parent cannot give away what he doesn't possess. Jesus gave of himself to these select men so they could do the same. The author writes, "Here is the great paradox of life, we must die to ourselves to live in Christ, and in that renunciation of ourselves, we must give ourselves away in service and devotion to our Lord."¹⁸

Fifth is demonstration. This is the heartbeat of the book as far as parenting and discipleship. Here are the main sections of this chapter: "He Showed Them How to Live",

¹⁵ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 43.

¹⁶ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 46.

¹⁷ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 53.

¹⁸ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 69.

“The Practice Of Prayer”, “Using Scripture”, “Supreme Soul Winning”, “Teaching Naturally”, “Class is Always In Session.”

Jesus demonstrated to his disciples how to live by living life with them. For example, look at Jesus’ prayer life. He was always praying and when the disciples expressed interest in praying He took the opportunity to teach them. In like manner, Jesus was constantly using Scriptures as teachable moments in the context of everyday life situations. The disciples eventually understood the importance of Scripture in their lives.

Jesus did not leave them on their own as He was demonstrating real life in real situations. This would be life-style discipleship that parents can use to teach their own children. Just think, going to the store can be a meaningful spiritual experience when done in the spotlight of Jesus and His life-style with His disciples. Coleman writes, “People are looking for a demonstration, not an explanation.”¹⁹ He explains:

When it is all boiled down, those of us who are seeking to train people must be prepared to have them follow us, even as we follow Christ (I Cor. 11:1). We are the exhibit (Phil 3:17, I Thess 2:7, 8; 2 Tim 1:13). They will do those things which they hear and see in us (Phil 4:9). Given time, it is possible through this kind of leadership to impart our way of living to those who are constantly with us.²⁰

Sixth is delegation. Jesus gave the (twelve disciples) clear projects to work on. Jesus trained them, and let the disciples observe what He was doing. However, there came a time in the ministry of the disciples where they needed to do the work themselves. This same principle is true with discipling our children. We do not turn them

¹⁹ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 76.

²⁰ Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 76.

loose in a world without being properly trained. However, after sending them out there is still a connection of follow-up which is the next step.

Seventh is supervision. The author calls this step on-the-job training. Jesus trained his disciples to give witness and salvation. Even after the disciples had a great victory Jesus kept the on-the-job training going. He did not leave them at the level they were on. He taught them to constantly be growing and learning. School was always in session.

Lastly is reproduction. For any type of life to be maintained reproduction is necessary. This is the basis for the Great Commission. Coleman writes:

The Great Commission of Christ given to his church summed it up in the command to “make disciples of every creature (Matthew 28:19). The word here indicates that the disciples were to go out into the world and win others who would come to be what they themselves were-disciples of Christ. This mission is emphasized even more when the Greek text of the passage is studied, and it is seen that the words go, baptize and teach are all participles which derive their force from the controlling verb “make disciples.” This means that the Great Commission is not merely to go to the ends of the earth preaching the gospel (Mark 16:15), not to baptize a lot of converts into the name of the triune God, not teach them the precepts of Christ, but to “make disciples”-to build people like themselves who were so constrained by the commission of Christ that they not only followed, but also led others to follow his way. Only as disciples were made could the other activities of the commission fulfill their purpose.²¹

I believe if the principles that were set by Jesus, as He had the salvation of the world as His mission, would be the principles we would follow as we disciple our children this would transform our world.

It is hard to separate Discipleship from the Great Commission. This next section is focused on the Great Commission in the context of parenting.

²¹Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, 101.

The Great Commission

The book *Prayer Evangelism* by Ed Silvano is also helpful in our discussion. The premise of the book is “talking to God about our neighbors before we talk to our neighbors about God.”²² The main Scriptures the author uses is Luke 10:5, 6, 8, 9. “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.’”

The four points he takes from this text are: First, speak peace to them; second, fellowship with them; third, take care of their needs; fourth, proclaim the good news.²³ This is a clear Biblical concept of discipleship.

The author then tells of the importance of Matthew 28:18, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” The author states, “A text without its context becomes a pretext. When we look at this verse (Matthew 28:19) isolated from its context, the weight of fulfilling the Great Commission comes to rest exclusively on our shoulders.”²⁴

This is what Dr. Coleman wrote in *The Great Commission Lifestyle*. He then points out the weight of evangelism does not rest on the individual but is based on Jesus’ authority and presence. He then writes about the lifestyle approach of evangelism.

²² Ed Silvano, *Prayer Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2000), 33.

²³ Silvano, *Prayer Evangelism*, 37.

²⁴ Silvano, *Prayer Evangelism*, 59.

The author wrote a lot about spiritual strongholds. He says the reason for strongholds being held by a defeated enemy is that the church is not stepping up and being the church that Jesus commands it to be. The real life examples of cities being changed and the spiritual climate shifting give me great hope and encouragement.

Robert Coleman's book, *The Great Commission Lifestyle* takes the Great Commission from Matthew 28:18-20 and breaks it into three major areas. First, is the affirmation that all authority in heaven and earth is Jesus'. Second is the mandate of making disciples in all nations. Lastly, is the promise of the Holy Spirit.

In chapter one, Matthew 28:18 is discussed, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." The Great Commission does not start at verse 19. Many times this is where many people start quoting the Great Commission. For me the following quote sets the whole tone of this book, "In one sweeping declaration, He dispels any uncertainty in their minds about His ability to handle any situation."²⁵ This quote is on the first page of part two "The Mandate." "As we might say in the academic world, the Great Commission is not an elective course; it is part of the required curriculum."²⁶

In this same section the author relates a story about his mother and the "world Christian" she was. Even though she did not travel the globe she supported others who did. She also raised two sons who have global impact.

Personal training and the smaller the group the deeper one can teach was written about from this quote: "He is showing us how the Great Commission can

²⁵ Robert E. Coleman, *The Great Commission Lifestyle* (Westwood, NJ: Revell, 1992), 31.

²⁶ Coleman, *The Great Commission Lifestyle*, 51.

become the controlling purpose of every family circle, every small group gathering, and every close friendship in this life."²⁷ Love is the first and last word to the Great Commission. I totally agree with the author when he writes, "You may not amount to much, but whatever you are, He wants all of it."²⁸

Another book that was helpful in my study was Robert Coleman's book, *The Mind of The Master*. The following quote sets the context for the entire book, "Genuine witness is but the reflection of Christian experience. It can neither be worked up through emotional appeals nor engineered through clever organization. Hence, to the degree that we share the mind of Christ, and feel His passion for the Kingdom-to that degree His ministry comes alive."²⁹

From the first lines in this book I knew I was reading a very important book for my spiritual life. I know it is important in life to understand what is important to a person. This book describes the inner life and thoughts of Jesus by looking at what he said and did during his short life on this earth, as we know it. This book was written within the context of His Great Commission.

Focusing on what Jesus focused on is the obvious starting point for the Great Commission. As follower, we too are called to be heavenly focused. Rebecca Pippert's book *Out of the Saltshaker and into the World* is a book about lifestyle evangelism. On several occasions the author contrasts what a project is versus the lifestyle approach. The project approach is turning on and off your Christian witness when the timing is

²⁷ Coleman, *The Great Commission Lifestyle*, 59.

²⁸ Coleman, *The Great Commission Lifestyle*, 100.

²⁹ Robert E. Coleman, *The Mind of the Master* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2000), 15.

right. The lifestyle approach is the natural way of evangelism and the way Jesus did evangelism. Obviously, the lifestyle approach would be best for discipling our children.

When the author was talking about not having all the answers when we are witnessing to others she wrote, "The key is authenticity and obedience, not a doctorate in theology. We haven't grasped that it really is okay for us to be who we are, when we are with non-Christians, even if we don't have all the answers to their questions or if our knowledge of Scripture is limited."³⁰ It has been my experience that most Christians parents don't think they know the Bible well enough to share with children. I believe that being authentic and open to our children helps in conversations with them.

Two of the most interesting sentences she wrote were, "In Jesus' case, we have the story of the holiest man who ever lived, and yet it was the prostitutes and lepers and thieves who adored him, and the religious who hated his guts."³¹ And along with that "It is a profound irony that the Son of God visited this planet and one of the chief complaints against him was that he was not religious enough."³² It is clear; Jesus did not follow the same "traditions" as the "church people." I believe this is still the situation today.

Another principle that was well illustrated was the importance of Jesus asking for what we have. The disciples willingly gave to Jesus and then Jesus used the disciple's gifts. "We are not judged by our success, but by our faithfulness and obedience."³³

³⁰ Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker and into the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1979), 24.

³⁰ Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker and into the World*, 39.

³² Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker and into the World*, 40.

³³ Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker and into the World*, 118.

Here is a good quote to conclude the interaction with this book. "Our message is not that we have it all together. Our message is that we know the One who does! That means we have the freedom to fail. It also means we have the freedom to be ourselves-plus."³⁴ This book took a lot of theology and doctrine and boiled it down to a life-style approach to evangelism.

Parenting/Discipleship

Andreas Kostenberger's book, *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation*, is one of the standard books on these topics. The book details God's design for families from a Biblical perspective. This book has 448 pages and it covers issues like, The Current Cultural Crisis, Marriage (Old and New Testament perspectives), Family (Old and New Testament) Parenting, Singleness, Homosexuality, Divorce and Remarriage, and Church Leadership. The focus for my study was in chapter 5 "Families in the Old Testament", Chapter 6 "Families in the New Testament" and Chapter 8 "Special Issues Related to the Family". In Chapter 5, "The Ties That Bind; Family in the Old Testament" lists the fathers' responsibility to their sons:

Naming their children (together with their wives); consecrating their firstborn sons to God; circumcising their sons on the eighth day (Genesis 17:12; 21:4; Leviticus 12:3); delighting in, having compassion on, and loving their sons; nurturing their sons' spiritual development, modeling before them their own deep personal commitment to God and the Scriptures, instructing them in the Scriptures and the traditions of salvation and covenant, and giving public witness to their spiritual commitment; guarding their own ethical conduct so as not to involve their sons in their sin (Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 5:9); instructing their sons in the way of wisdom, developing their character and skills for life and vocation, and teaching them to follow their father's steps (Proverbs 1-9); disciplining their sons when they erred and presenting them to the communal

³⁴Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker and into the World*, 121.

leaders for discipline when the sons refused to be corrected; judiciously managing their household affairs, especially with regard to inheritance, so as to ensure a smooth transition to the subsequent generation; arranging for their sons' marriage to suitable wives (Genesis 24; Judges 4); pronouncing blessings on their sons prior to their death (Genesis 27; 48-49).³⁵

As the book indicated during Old Testament times it was a time of a strong male leadership. This was shown because the major focus was on the father and their sons. So the list above is longer and more in depth than the wives' responsibilities and their responsibilities to their daughters.

Pages 101-107 go into great detail discussing the importance of passing on the religious heritage of God to our children. These pages cite passages from the Pentateuch, Historical Books, and Psalms. Under the heading of "The Importance of Teaching Children about God", the author highlights: The Law in Deuteronomy 4:1-14, (especially v. 9), The Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5:6-21. The Shema in Deuteronomy 6:4, and the Greatest Commandment in Deuteronomy 6:5. Importance is stressed on teaching God's faithfulness and not forgetting all that God has done for Israel.

In the same section of the book Psalms 78:4-8 stresses the point of the importance of passing God's work to the next generation, "The Pentateuch, the Old Testament historical books, and the book of Psalms are pervaded by the consciousness that parents (and especially fathers) must pass on their religious heritage to their children."³⁶

³⁵ Andreas J Kostenberger, with David W. Jones., *God, Marriage, and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 95-96.

³⁶ Kostenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 102.

The author goes on to say that as Christian parents we too are commanded to pass on God's heritage to our children. "While there may be Christian Sunday school teachers and other significant teachers in a child's life, parent must never go back on their God-given responsibility to be the primary source of religious instruction for their children."³⁷

On page 104 the author list 21 positive attribute that parents need to teach their children from the book of Proverbs. They major emphasis in Proverbs and parenting would be proper discipline and the importance of teaching this and modeling it for our children. This concept would be the same concept that Voddie Baucham describes in his first phases of discipleship.

In Chapter 6, Families in the New Testament, the author writes about what Jesus said about parents, children, and Paul's teachings. Both placed the emphasis on being obedient to God and for parents teaching this obedience to their children. The author goes on to say, "Disobedience toward one's parents is put on the same level as treason and idol worship."³⁸ In like manner the author states:

Parents who neglect to hold their children accountable for rendering obedience fail them in that they do not help them along the path of Christian discipleship, of which obedience is a central component. Hence the primary importance of obedience is not for parents to receive their children's obedience, but for parents to help children to learn to exercise obedience ultimately in their relationship with God.³⁹

Another key point that would match Robert Coleman's book *The Master Plan of Evangelism* would be the importance of demonstration, supervision, working together.

³⁷Kostenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 36.

³⁸Kostenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 115.

³⁹Kostenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 117.

There is an incredible teaching tool when families serve together in the local church, “Not only are children to be taught the Christian faith and helped to pursue the path of discipleship, they are to be included in ministry performed in the context of the family and the church.”⁴⁰

Chapter 8 deals with issues such as the different examples of parenting, single parenting, physical discipline, cultivating masculinity and femininity, spiritual warfare. The conclusion of the chapter provides the most help in regards to parenting and discipleship. The author list four important ideals for the Christian parent to help disciple your children.

First, is the importance of family worship, devotions and Bible study. He once again stressed the importance of the father as the head of the home to take the lead on these issues. Once again this would be phase 3 in Baucham’s model.

Second, is the importance of starting or maintaining family traditions. Thirdly, is to engage in wholesome activities such as “reading, outdoor activities, and spending time with other children who can serve as positive role models.”⁴¹ Excessive TV watching, web-serving and computer games were seen as a deterrent to these wholesome activities.

Lastly, is the importance of spiritual warfare and being aware there is an enemy who wants to attack the God-given institution of marriage and parenting. This was also a major emphasis in Stormie Omartian’s book *The Power of a Praying Parent*. This book

⁴⁰Kostenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 127.

⁴¹Kostenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 171.

goes on to discuss many culturally relevant issues and goes in great detail on marriage and the family. It is saturated with Scripture.

One of Omartian's key attributes of discipleship is prayer. Jesus constantly prayed for His disciples. (John 17) This book stresses the importance of praying for our children. The author details about thirty areas of prayer in regards to children. She stresses that no matter how old your children are it is important to be praying for your children. After being convinced of the importance of praying for her children, she did not have peace about the constant need for daily prayer for her children. She knew God wanted to have her constantly put her children in God's hands. "This didn't mean that we would now abdicate all responsibility as parents. Rather, we would declare ourselves to be in full partnership with God. He would shoulder the heaviness of the burden and provide wisdom, power, protection and ability far beyond ourselves."⁴²

Omartian went on to say that there is still the responsibility to teach and nurture their children. However, there was a release of stress knowing God was now involved in parenting. "An important part of our job was to keep the details of our child's life covered in prayer".⁴³

She also stressed the importance of not praying for her will to be done but the importance of God's will in all prayers for her children. She writes, "I have found it's better to pray more along the lines of "Lord, show me how to pray for this child. Help me to raise him Your way, and may Your will be done in his life."⁴⁴

⁴²Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Parent* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995), 16.

⁴³Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Parent*, 16.

⁴⁴Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Parent*, 17.

Here is a good definition of prayer that is useful in the context of parenting and discipleship; "Prayer is acknowledging and experiencing the presence of God and inviting His presence into our lives and circumstances. It's seeking the presence of God and releasing the power of God which gives us the means to overcome any problem."⁴⁵

Another helpful section was the importance of praying for our children with other parents. The Bible says, "If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19). Also, "one can put a thousand to flight and two can put ten thousand to flight" (Deuteronomy 32:30). It doesn't take much of a mathematical mind to figure out, then, how powerful ten to twelve parents can be when they join in prayer and cry out to God for their children."⁴⁶

The rest of the book goes into specific areas to pray for your children. Many helpful Bible verses are given in each section, along with examples of the types of prayers mentioned. This book should be on the top of any list of parents who know the power of prayer.

Revolutionary Parenting by George Barna is based on research of parents who raised strong Christian children and the children who Barna considered revolutionary. He also came to the conclusion that the Biblical principles are the best advice on how to disciple a child, including the many books on parenting that have been written in the past twenty years. There are many books on parenting but according to Barna, they are

⁴⁵ Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Parent*, 18.

⁴⁶ Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Parent*, 25.

not based on objective research. The parenting books he looked at were written from experience and observations of “the isolated leading the desperate.”⁴⁷

On paged xiv and xv he lists three parenting models.⁴⁸ First, is the parenting by default, which is going with the flow of culture, an approach that since everybody is doing it, it must be fine. Second, is the trial and error approach which the author calls experimental parenting. Last, is the Revolutionary Parenting which is the model that would be the opposite of the first parenting model. It is using God’s Word as the basis of parenting, which would be the discipling your child with the Christian worldview and the purpose of being obedient to God.

This book is a follow up to Barna’s book written in 2003 called *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions*. He wrote the book in 2003 to help churches focus on the important ministry of discipling children in the church. As indicated by his research children’s worldview is developed at a young age and therefore should be a major focus of every church. In fact, according to his research Barna states, “I have become convinced that the spiritual war occurring in individual lives is pretty much won or lost by the age of thirteen. What parents do with their youngsters prior to the teen years is of paramount importance to the Kingdom of God on earth.”⁴⁹

The spiritual champions have a biblical worldview, moral absolutes and believe God has created them. They also are service-oriented wanting to impact their world.

Barna writes:

⁴⁷George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting: What the Research Shows Really Works* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), xiii.

⁴⁸Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, xiv-xv.

⁴⁹Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, xxi-xxii.

By spiritual champions, I mean individuals who have embraced Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord; accept the Bible as truth and as the guide for life; and to seek to live in obedience to its principles and in search of ways to continually deepen their relationship with God. Spiritual champions live in ways that are noticeably different from the norm-even when compared to the average churchgoer.⁵⁰

A fact that his research showed was that the greatest impact the church had on the children was to impact the children's parents. The reason for this is because as the research indicates and the Bible clearly teaches, it is the parents who have the most influence on their child.

What was very clear from the research is there were no set rules or predetermined formula for successful discipleship of our children. The research was clear that there was a consistency in the parents' spiritual life to Jesus and this was caught by their children. A clear comparison to this book and *The Power of Praying Parent* would be illustrated by this quote:

As much as you love your children, God loves them more. As deeply as you desire to do what is best for your children, God wants it even more urgently. As we rely upon Him rather than our own ideas and wisdom, we can be assured that our your ones will experience the best that God has to offer, through us and others.⁵¹

The writer used the term coach-parent and stressed the importance of desired outcomes for your child. A parent would be wise to have clear goals and to share them with your child like a good coach would do. Also, stressed in the study was the importance of a strong relationship with your child. This does not take place during the

⁵⁰Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, xvi.

⁵¹Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 16.

teen age years but must be nurtured on a consistent basis from your child's birth. This finding parallels Bauchman' and Coleman's books.

Spending time with your child is also a key to nurturing your child. Studies indicated that the those children who grew up with their Christian faith and kept it spent about 90 minutes to 120 minutes a day in dialogue with their parents.⁵² In contrast, the typical family interacts less than fifteen minutes per day.⁵³ This was also Coleman's conclusion in his book, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Jesus lived everyday life with His disciples. "In fact, when we asked young adults what they felt were the most significant mistakes that America's parents have made, the second-highest ranked mistake was not spending enough time with their children. The failure to provide appropriate discipline was the top-ranked deficiency."⁵⁴

The author indicated that rarely is a 100% response recorded in any study. However, in this study one important common theme did receive a 100% response on the surveys. "The most important focus of their children's training was the development of godly character."⁵⁵

The research that Barna has done in *Revolutionary Parenting* also shows the role of the Church is to reinforce the parents rather than be the sole provider of instruction to the children.⁵⁶ Barna explains, "In short, Revolutionary Parents believe they are in

⁵²Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 33.

⁵³Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 34.

⁵⁴Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 90.

⁵⁵Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 46.

⁵⁶Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 56.

charge from day one, behave like people who are in charge, and never allow doubts to linger as to who is in charge.”⁵⁷

Once again, the people who this study surveyed are parents who were successful in discipling their children. It confirms the Biblical mandate of parents taking the responsibility for discipling their children. Bible study and prayer were found to be most effective when modeling. In fact 60% learn from this modeling.⁵⁸ This is parallel to Baucham’s three phase philosophy. Barna writes, “Parents are more likely to raise spiritual champions if they; genuinely love God, Pray daily, Worship regularly, Read the Bible habitually for personal development, Participate in the life of a spiritual community and Apply their resources, spiritual gifts, and natural abilities frequently to influencing lives”.⁵⁹

Salvation was important to all of the parents who were surveyed. As Barna states: “most of them opted for a lifelong emphasis upon discipleship rather than evangelism. The ideal stance may be a combination of both, (evangelism and discipleship) but the bottom line is that evangelism without discipleship is spiritual abuse”.⁶⁰

Serving together as a family, praying, Bible study and worship was an emphasis to raising a spiritual champion.⁶¹ On pages 122-124 of *Revolutionary Parenting*, Barna

⁵⁷Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 83.

⁵⁸Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 97.

⁵⁹Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 103.

⁶⁰Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 110.

⁶¹Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 112.

showed there were specific Bible stories and doctrines Barna found from his research that the parents used to train their children.⁶²

Family Driven Faith: Doing What It Takes To Raise Sons And Daughters Who Walk With God, by Voddie Baucham Jr., has most of the same points as Barna's book *Revolutionary Parenting*. The author has a lot of information on the importance of a Biblical Worldview. On page 72, he lists the major Christian books that have had the most influence on the topic.⁶³ The author stresses the importance to parents for the need of a Christian world-view of parenting verses the world's.

For me, a major emphasis of the book was described on pages 108 and 109 as he explains Ephesians 6:1-4, "From this passage of Scripture we can extrapolate at least three distinct phases of preparation for our children. Phase 1 is the discipline and training phase. Phase 2 is what I like to call the catechism phase. Finally, in phase 3, we begin discipleship".⁶⁴

Under phase one, he discussed the importance of teaching your children obedience. Phase two is the phase where biblical theology is taught using questions and answers. Phase three is living out phase one and two in real life. This book stressed the importance of a loving relationship with your children so when they are older there is a level of trust and love.

On pages 119-121 Bauchman goes into detail about Phase 2 (The catechism phase) The last part of Ephesians 6:4 is a key to Bauchman's conclusions of the

⁶²Appendix A, page 110.

⁶³Voddie T. Baucham, Jr, *Family Driven Faith: Doing What it Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 72.

⁶⁴Voddie T. Baucham, Jr, *Family Driven Faith*, 108-109.

importance of this phase, when it states, “bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” The context is key because the context of this verse is for parents and children. Bauchman states,

Catechism is not a magic bean or silver bullet. We still have to work at teaching our children. However, the catechism is an invaluable tool that facilitates the process. More importantly, the catechism lays the foundation for the discipleship that is to follow. Without catechism our discipleship is reduced to a list of moralisms.⁶⁵

A major problem with parents discipling their children is that most parents have never been disciplined themselves. So, they do not have any concept of what it is to disciple their children. I believe this points to a great omission in the church. As with Barna and others Bauchman agrees that the role of the church is not to disciple the children but to help support and train the parents to be able to disciple. Like the authors studied it has been my experience that most parents want to have a hands off approach to discipling their children because they do not know how.

Family Worship is also a major emphasis of this book. Bauchman includes reading the Bible together as a family, praying and singing together. He believes in the “family integrated church” which is a movement where children of all ages are involved in the worship service. Nursery and a special place for the kids to go during the “adult” service is something he thinks is a negative discipleship component. For a complete definition, see page 217, # 6 of his notes.⁶⁶

As with my hopes and desires, I believe discipling our children can lead to a great revival in our lifetime:

⁶⁵Voddie T. Bauchman, Jr., *Family Driven Faith*, 119.

⁶⁶Voddie T. Bauchman, Jr., *Family Driven Faith*, 217.

Family driven faith is about more than just being a better parent. This is a complete lifestyle and worldview overhaul. If we believe that God calls us to worship Him without rivals, build our homes on a foundation of biblical love, adopt a biblical worldview, teach the Word in our homes, mark our homes as God's territory, and keep our prosperity in check, then we must also believe that God intends for the church to aid and not hinder families in this process. Unfortunately there are times when this is not the case. I say unfortunately because we may be missing out on a tremendous revival.⁶⁷

It is my hope that the next generation will disciple their children and follow God's ways of Biblical discipleship. May parents all over the nation catch the heart of God and disciple their children.

As I read Billy Graham's book, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham*, there was a nagging struggle I kept coming back to. This struggle I had was I did not understand how this great man of God could be across the world when a major family moment was about to happen. The biggest questions that kept lurking was when his children were born and he missed it. Also, as his kids were growing up he missed a lot of the day-to-day joys. He appeared to have missed the opportunity to disciple his own children. Page after page this struggle came to the surface for me. He was meeting presidents, kings and queens and other world leaders but it appeared to me this was his life and not his family life.

To put my own struggle in simple terms, I was trying to find the balance between preaching the Gospel of Jesus and serving Him with my whole heart, mind and soul and still being the husband and father I am called to be. I face this struggle and I do not travel all over the world and meet world leaders. Being in a "busy" church and just doing the day-to-day ministry and finding time to nurture my family is a struggle.

⁶⁷Voddie T. Baucham, Jr., *Family Driven Faith*, 169.

As I started reading this book, I was questioning why Billy Graham would be away so much. It is hard to question one of your greatest heroes. Yet, these questions kept coming back as I would read the great things God was doing through him. His family seemed to be just another low priority to him. How could God tell Billy Graham to be across the world when during this time one of his children would be born? I understand obedience to God's will and ways. However, I do not know Billy's heart, but it seemed his family was not a priority during some parts of this book.

Sometimes I could not understand, as I read these 760 pages, regarding the dedication to God and the dedication to family. This appeared out of balance to me. However, I know as I was reading Graham's story, these struggles were in my heart. So, the times he wasn't there for his family stuck out more than it might for another person. All of my confusion on the family issue and serving God finally came to some understanding in the last chapter in this book. On page 723 he writes, "Although I have much to be grateful for as I look back over my life, I also have many regrets. I have failed many times, and would do many things differently. For, one thing I would speak less and study more, and I would spend more time with my family."⁶⁸

When I read these words, some issues came into focus for me. As already mentioned Billy Graham is a man I respect and know God has used him greatly for God's kingdom. I then realized Billy Graham had the same struggles I have. He was being obedient to his calling. When it appeared that God opened a door, he walked through it.

⁶⁸ Billy Graham, *Just As I am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (San Francisco, CA: Harper/Zondervan, 1997), 723.

People struggle with God's timing and purposes. It was healing to know one of the greatest evangelists that has ever lived had the same struggles I deal with.

When I read the words, "I would spend more time with my family," this was a healing moment for me. Because as I read the seven hundred pages up to this point I didn't get the sense that being away from his family was an issue. I was wrong in my assumptions. This concludes some of the books that have helped me to grasp the topic of this thesis. As to the progression of discipleship and parenting, God has designed parents to be the major contributor to this great adventure as shown by many examples in this chapter. My hope is there are some who would examine the Scriptures, their own heart and some of the studies that have been reported to take discipling your children as seriously as God does.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESIGN

This project was designed to edify parents, grandparents and other nurturing adults at New Community Church in St. Marys, Ohio. The intent of the project was to instruct them in the critical importance of discipling the children in their lives and give these adults the resources and tools to help them in this quest.

Initially the intent was to have the participants who had younger children participate in the study. However, as I examined the congregation I decided to broaden my scope due to the importance grandparents have in this community in raising their grandchildren. St. Marys, Ohio is a static community of about eight-thousand people with few people moving in or out. The majority of the congregation has lived in this community their entire lives. For the most part, the grandparents are an important part of raising their grandchildren, in fact, a lot more than in any other of the seven communities I have lived in. For these reasons, I included all ages in the study.

In the study I will be sensitive to those whose relationship with their children needs improvement. I do not want to create guilt or try to negatively manipulate them. Even so, some may experience a deep sense of regret because they have not done the things they may come to think they should have done. I want to encourage them to be willing to start where ever they are now. I also think these principles would help any children's workers in the church as they try to help fill any voids of parents. We do not live in a perfect world. Some parents in the study are struggling with divorce, custody

issues and other issues. My intent is to show how Jesus spread the Gospel to the world and illustrate how we can use the same principles for our children.

Jesus' disciples were grown men, all at different levels in their spiritual life. He loved His disciples. Yet, even they did not always understand what Jesus was doing for them. However in the end, and by God's power of the Holy Spirit, they changed the world and did all of the eight steps of discipleship.

So, I will stress the importance of starting anew, wherever the relationship and the age of the parent's child. My goal is to give all the parents hope that God can redeem any of our human failings and to give them tools to work with.

Teaching Curriculum

I wanted the participants to discover the responsibility that God has given to the parents to be the major source of Christian teaching to their children. I also wanted to give them the resources and tools to help them in this process. As already indicated in this study, most Christian parents and children do not have a Biblical worldview. So, this study was designed to show them solid Biblical principles that they could use to help them disciple their children.

I developed a four-week teaching curriculum that was based on my RQ's developed in this thesis. RQ 1: Which principles of *The Master Plan of Evangelism* can help parents disciple their children? RQ 2: What are some biblical principles to help parents raise their children? RQ 3: What resources are there for parents who want to disciple their children according to biblical principles? RQ 4: How can the church help train parents to disciple their children?

To further enhance the instruction and retention, I created a manual for the parents to have for the class as well as for future reference. The manual's title is *Discipling Our Children: A study for parents and Christians who nurture God's children.*¹

The First lesson will be teaching the eight principles of *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. There will be a "tool time" for each principle. I will ask for a 30 day commitment to the tool time and the class.

Each of the lessons has been framed around my research questions. I see a good flow of information by giving them the big picture first with hands-on experience before digging into the theology. I like the progression of starting with a life-style approach in the context of living. The specifics of how involved the parents are with their children on a day to day basis is unclear but from what I now observe, it appears grandparents spend as much time with the children as do the parents. I have a general idea from pastoring this church for about a year and half, however, there are some new families that will be a part of the study so my knowledge of their commitment is unknown at this time.

Lesson two will focus on the theology of what they will have already started doing in everyday life. So my desire for session two is to help solidify what was taught in session one. The participants will apply session one material within a week's time of the parent's attempt at living session one.

Lesson three will provide some new resources. Only after several weeks working on the principles of *The Master Plan of Evangelism* will the parents have the awareness

¹ Copy of the class manual - Appendix A, page 107.

of additional resources they will need. My hypothesis is parents have not been disciplined themselves so they do not know how to disciple. Not having been disciplined themselves could be an issue for them to be consistent in this month's trial. Because of my hypothesis about the lack of general understanding about the Great Commission, Discipleship and parenting, after completion of the course I will offer to purchase a book of their choosing to further their understanding.

Lesson four's emphasis is an attempt to connect the participants to the church and to give them specific direction on the last 4 principles of *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. How exciting it would be for the parents to teach other parents what they have learned in the context of the church? Once again it will be good to have the insights and backing of the grandparents in this quest.

It is possible there may be some disconnects between what I am asking for and what they will actually do. I think the manual and the time to discuss specifics in class will help give them sufficient support to get them started in the life-style discipleship approach.

Every lesson will include two "tool times" the participant will do weekly. I would give them examples of each "tool time". The tool times are the eight principles of Robert Coleman's principles that were taught in *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. I arranged the tool times in the context of discipleship and children. Each week we will have time in class to interact and discuss the assignments.

The project involved eighteen participants from New Community Church. We met for four sessions. We had two classes, one met on Wednesday nights and the other

following our Sunday morning Worship Service. I also met with several people on a one-to-one basis due to scheduling conflicts. The Wednesday Night class is when the majority of the class attended. If a participant could not attend the Wednesday Night class they made up the class on Sunday Morning when the same lesson that they missed was taught.

The project involved a four-week study on Biblical teaching and examples of The Great Commission, Life-Style Discipleship and Parenting. Also, the participants will be encouraged and given the importance of attending all four sessions because the sessions build upon one another.

In addition to attending all four sessions, emphasis will be on using the tools that were taught in these sessions. The tools are hands-on time with their children, along with emphasis on attention to their own private spiritual development. I understand that there will be a lot of information in each session and a four-week class is not a lot of time to change routines and behavior. However, the intention is to help form goals and habits in regards to The Great Commission, discipleship and parenting.

Session one is titled: **What principles of the Master Plan of Evangelism can help parents disciple their children?** I spent the class time teaching the eight principles Dr. Coleman developed in this book. Then I applied these same principles to discipling our children. This session was the foundation of all other information taught for this project. During my research, my conclusion was these eight principles will be helpful for the participants to give them some solid and hands-on examples and tools to disciple their children.

Since these principles are the principles that Jesus used to disciple His disciples when He walked on earth my conclusion is they would be good for helping parents disciple their children. These principles were the principles Jesus used to fulfill The Great Commission and to evangelize the world. Could we not learn from his methods?

For every class I created opportunities for the participants to be able to have hands-on experience with the material. There are eight principles discussed in the book *The Master Plan Of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman. After teaching on all of the principles in the first session I broke the principles into pairs. After the first session the first tool time was **Selection**. I titled this assignment. "I'm praying for you". Jesus prayed all night and then chose his disciples. God gives us our children, so this first lesson was praying for our children. This concept was to be a staple of the class. There were four areas of praying for the children. First, pray for them while they are sleeping. I encourage the parents to go into the sleeping child's room and to pray blessings over them. If there child has moved away I still encouraged them to pray for their child.

The second point for the first tool time was for the parent to hug their child and tell them that they love them on a daily basis. Here again I encouraged those who did not have children at home to do what they could and to let them know they loved them and prayed for them. The third point was to thank God that He placed your child in your life. Even if a relationship was not as it should be these steps would be useful in showing unconditional love for their child. To cover all children an adult has influence over I encourage all participants to look and see what children God has placed in their lives.

This is helpful because we did have several participants who did not have any children but were involved in nurturing relationships with children.

The second tool time that was mentioned for the first week was **Association**. I titled this section, "let's do this together". I use the last part of the Great Commission from Matthew 28:20 *"...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* I will start by teaching the importance of life-style discipleship, teaching them to look for opportunities for the parents to do things together in the context of life. These things should be intentional to do activities with their children which they have been doing on their own. One-one one time is stressed. I will also encourage them to commit to a monthly breakfast or coke break to be with their child. I will give some class time so they could formulate some ideas before leaving this session. There are three sections; things I normally do alone, ways I could include my child and lastly, things I commit to: This will conclude the first week session.

Session two is titled: **What are some biblical principles to help parents raise their children?** This lesson will discuss seven key Scriptural passages that are applicable to the Great Commission, discipleship and parenting. I will teach on seven Biblical passages as they apply to these three key areas for my study. Here is a summary:

1) The Great Commission For Parents. (Matthew 28:18-20)

2) The Role of Humility and Admonition in Discipleship. (Matthew 18:5-6)

3) What is Life-Style Discipleship. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

4) The Importance of Parents Training their Children. (Proverbs 22:6)

5) God's Word Warns Us to Keep the Hearts of Our Children. (Mal. 4:5-6)

6) God's Provisions (Psalms 127:1-5)

7) The Role of Family Service to God. (Joshua 24:14-15)

(For the complete list with details please see chapter two of this thesis.)

The second session included tool time number three which was **Consecration** and tool time number four which is **Impartation**. Consecration is important to this process because it has to do with complete obedience to God. As parents, we need to obey God if we expect our children to obey us. The Bible gives a great privilege to parents as the key nurturing of their children. This tool time is to have the parents check the interaction between them as parents and their children. If the interaction with their children was not strong it was encouraged for them to make steps to mend the relationship. I titled this tool time, "Let's get our roles straight". Our relationship to God is knowing He is in control and has all authority. We cannot teach a proper relationship without having our relationship right with God. Of all of the tool times this one was the hardest one to have specific hands on experience due to the importance of our spiritual life. However, I did make this a major emphasis of this project.

Tool Time number four was called, "Let's read the Bible together." Coleman calls this principle **Impartation**. A constant theme in this thesis is that a parent cannot teach what they do not know or live in a way they do not believe. This lesson shares the

importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit. There will be some time for reflection, followed by some questions to ask themselves in the quiet of the moment. At the end of this tool time I stress the importance of reading the Bible together for the remainder of our thirty days together. It is vital that the importance that the Bible stories to be read as the true written word of God not just some good stories to read about.²

Our church is reading daily Bible programs from the New Testament and the Old Testament. There is one chapter per day for five days in each Testament. I encouraged an age appropriate portion to be read with their child. For a younger child I recommended several children's Bibles that we have personally used with our children. A major point that of emphasis is the importance of consistency in reading God's word to their children.

Session three is titled: **What resources are there for parents who want to disciple their children according to biblical principles?** This session focuses on particular resources on The Great Commission, discipleship and parenting. I will give a brief description of the resources that were most helpful in my research. (For further depth, please see chapter three of this thesis project). Parents will all be at different stages in life and Christian depth, so a brief survey will be discussed in this lesson.

Through my research, I chose the most helpful books in the area of Discipleship Resources, The Great Commission Resources and Parenting and Discipleship Resources. (class manual)

² Copies of the class manual - Appendix A, page 107.

Because of the importance of learning about the three major areas and resources that were developed in this class, all participants were given the opportunity to be given one of the books discussed in class. The top request was *The Great Commission Life-Style* by Robert Coleman. The second most requested book was *The Power of a Praying Parent*. Many in the class said they would order their own on the internet since they were not sure of just one they wanted to get. This was encouraging to this writer.

The title I gave Tool Time number five was, "Let me show you how", or **Demonstration**. John 13:15 says, "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." I told the participants to plan one activity this week demonstrating to your child a needed life skill or lesson. I will make sure age-appropriate activities are described. Once again I give class time and provide room in the manual for the following categories; "brainstorm ideas" with the class, "my plan and commitment" and then as a follow up, "how it went". I am aware the discipleship is a lot more than life skills and parenting. However, it is clear to me from the participants in the class that I need to start with life-skills verses spiritual issues so the class could see the progression and importance of the principles of session one.

The second part of session three is **Delegation**. For this tool time I called it, "Now you give it a try". This tool time is the direct follow up to the last tool time of demonstration. Now they will give their child the assignment they did in the demonstration phase in tool time five. I place the following sections in the manual to help provide direction; "My commitment", "How it went" and "what would I do differently next time".

Session four is titled: **How can the church help train parents to disciple their children?** Since my process of research is in the context of the church I want, first of all, to see the participants' thoughts regarding the church. From my research on Biblical worldview and Christians during this time, it has proven that the church is not effective in producing people with a Biblical worldview.

From my precedent research, I found three areas to answer this fourth research question. First, provide the parents with the training and support and tools. I have focused the class on training, support and giving tools for the parents to do these things in the context of home and the church. Second, provide opportunities to serve.

Lastly, teach the parents the importance of their role. One key element of the class will be to have times to pray and discuss the "tool times" which the participants participated in during the week after the particular session. This key element of my study will help identify and supply the support that the church needs to provide.

The last session, session 4, tool times were **supervision** and **reproduction**. Tool time number seven I named, "How are you doing?" As we disciple our child, or any person, it is important to check in on how they are doing. Jesus did not leave the disciples on their own. He demonstrated, then delegated and did not leave them on their own. For constant growth a disciple/parent needs to be in contact and provide feedback on a constant basis. Here were the four categories that were provided in the manual; "what my child did well", "what my child needs help on", "what I modeled well as we worked together" and lastly "what could have gone better".

The number eight tool time I called, "Show your little brother how!" (or sister, or cousin). Reproduction is what Robert Coleman called this last principle. Jesus told his disciples to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last. This last step is critical in the making of disciples. If we do not reproduce, we are not fulfilling the Great Commission. The three categories in the manual for this tool time is, "setting up the older child to succeed", "my commitment" and "How it went".

Research Methodology

My plan was to improve the participants understanding of the importance of parents disciplining their children in the context of the Great Commission. So, prior to the first lesson I gave an initial Likert survey to attempt to measure what their understanding was before the study. It was the writer's intent that the survey prior to any material taught would be a good starting point and not affect the response of the initial survey.

At this time I will give them the class manual and have the participants put their name and a four digit survey code on the first page of the manual. This manual is for them to keep. I will not see the manual or code numbers so the participants will have the complete freedom to know the surveys will be completely confidential. This will allow freedom for them to be completely open and honest in their responses.

The initial survey is a Likert Scale survey with twenty five questions.³ There were five choices for each question from survey and the answer choices were; strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. I was trying to get an initial range on

³ Copy of the Initial Survey - Appendix B, page 140.

some common ground issues like, were they a Christian who was raised in a Christian home and were they currently intentionally discipling their children. I also asked questions about the Great Commission, life-style discipleship their own personal spiritual life and if they were willing to use Biblical resources to help them raise their children. After all four sessions are completed I will give them a follow-up survey⁴ with the twenty-five questions on the initial survey plus three other questions and seven open questions. The three added questions were:

26. During the lessons on The Great Commission, discipleship and parenting, I was able to work on the 8 principles taught.

27. After taking this class and working on the "tool times" I am better prepared to disciple my child/children.

28. I am committed to the life-style approach to discipleship with my child/children, which will include focused prayer for them.

I asked these last three Likert Scale questions because they were three crucial areas I was focusing on. First, did the participants actually do the projects that the class taught? This question will help me to form conclusions from the final survey. I will not make any strong correlations on the participants who did not do the tool times in this class. This is why question 26 will be a key question during my analyses.

Question # 27 Second; did the "tool times" and putting the Biblical tools to work help prepare them to disciple their children? So, if my hypothesis that "parents do want to disciple their children but they just don't know how" is true, then this response will help me with the answer to help form a conclusion. However, there could still be some

⁴ Copy of the Follow Up Survey - Appendix C, page 145.

parents who either think they are already doing a good job in discipling their children and will not use the tools provided.

Lastly, question # 28 asks for comment on the statement, "I am committed to the life-style approach to discipleship with my child/children, which will include focused prayer for them". I am checking to see if the participant would commit themselves to the life-style approach to discipleship and pray for their children. I thought if the class was effective they would commit to the principles that were taught.

Another addition to the follow-up survey from the initial survey was asking seven open ended questions that the participants were encouraged to answer in short sentences. The open ended questions were an opportunity to get more specific results than the Likert Scale. I will look for trends as I analyze the answers along with how they answered the new questions to the follow-up survey.

There are four weeks, the sessions, and eight tool times between the initial and the follow-up surveys. No one saw any surveys between taking the surveys so I believe I will get some good open and honest results from the two surveys.

Here are the seven open ended questions I added to the follow-up survey;

- 1) What was most helpful to you in this class?
- 2) What was confusing and or unclear in this class?
- 3) What specific three things will you follow-through on as a result of this class?
- 4) Are there any specific topics you would have liked covered?
- 5) Prior to this class have you heard of Life-Style discipleship or Life-Style evangelism? If so what was your understanding of it prior to and after the class? What is your understanding now?
- 6) What specific things can your church do to help you disciple your child/children?
- 7) How can you transfer these principles to your grandchildren?

Once again I thought the open ended questions would help evaluate in greater detail specific answers that I could not generate from the Likert Survey. When I analyze the two surveys with the open ended questions and answers they will give me a greater understanding if the class material was learned.

A pre and post Likert Scale Survey would help determine if the desired outcomes were accomplished. The responses on the Initial Survey will be compared to those on the Follow-up Survey. I will make an excel spread sheet on the eighteen participants and have the answers in a easy and usable format. I will compare of the first and second surveys and they should prove the hypothesis of this writer. As expressed above, the key to the follow up survey will be in the follow up survey questions 26-28 to see if the participant actually participated in the tool times. Having both surveys side by side along with the open ended questions will be helpful in forming my conclusions.

CHAPTER 5

OUTCOMES

Overall, I was pleased from the results of the surveys. The first thing I did was have all of the information collated.¹ I compiled all of the initial and follow-up surveys and computed the results on an Excel spread sheet. I took each question and totaled the responses. I then made a hard copy of the results to more easily get the big picture from the study. With all the results from both surveys next to each other for an easier comparison, I noticed there were major shifts in answers in ten of the questions when comparing the initial survey with the follow-up survey. These ten questions are the questions I will compare and contrast from the initial responses that were taken before the class with the follow-up survey that was taken after the four classes.

Also, as I was compiling the data I learned I should have asked for the ages of the participants and the ages of the children and the ages of their grandchildren. Here is the breakdown of the class. There were a total of five participants who had children ten years and younger, this included two married couples. My initial plan was to have a majority of parents with young children. However, these parents did not participate in this project. There were three participants with teenagers. There was one couple who had one adult child and no grandchildren. There were two married couples who were grandparents and four single participants who were grandparents. The single grandparents involved two who were married and two who were single. I had one

¹ Collated Survey Results (Initial and Follow-Up Survey) - Appendix D, page 151.

married couple who dropped out of the class after week two and they had two young children.

Question Results

Question one read; "I am a Christian." On the initial survey fourteen strongly agreed and four agreed. On the follow-up survey all eighteen answered strongly agree. I asked this question to see if my sample surveyed were Christians. I thought this would be a good starting point before diving into the material and Christians would be more willing to disciple their children with Biblical principles. I cannot account for why every person surveyed after the class answered as strongly agree. However, I was pleased with the results.

I learned from question one that after the class one hundred percent of the participants answered the question as they strongly agreed that they were Christians. So, all of the answers from this project will be based on individuals who consider themselves Christians. As the pastor of this survey sample group I would mostly agree with this assessment. The other questions will not be as easy to confirm or deny.

Question three was; "Spending time with my child/children is a major priority for my life." Eleven strongly agreed and seven agreed on the initial survey. In comparison to fourteen strongly agree and four agree for the follow up survey. The response to this question was pleasing to this writer. At least on paper all participants acknowledged that spending time was a major priority to them even before the class. I would expect this from all participants who agreed to be a part of these four week sessions in the middle of summer.

The shift of three more to strongly agree was a result I was hoping for. This was some confirmation that parents do want to be active in the lives of their children. What this question did not answer was if or how were they were putting this priority to action. Answering a survey as a priority is different than actual commitment and time.

What I learned from question three was, at least in a mental capacity, it was important to spend time with their children. When spending time with your child (association) is revealed to be a discipleship opportunity, it helps created the importance of making this a priority in life as shown in the survey response. An implication to these results would be to use the importance of spending time with your child as an aspect of teaching this class in the community. In this community football dominates community life. The football team is a proud tradition in St. Marys. Part of the tradition is winning and the part of the community's mood is how well the team played on Friday night. I believe I could use the results of this question as an entry selling point to the community to further teach other classes in the future. Since this community honors football players and as a former high school quarterback this could be a connection to the community. However, the samples in my survey were ones which Christians need to take into consideration.

Question four was; "I am intentional to demonstrate a task or life lesson to my children." Here is the breakdown from the initial survey, six strongly agree, ten agree, and two disagree. The follow-up survey shifted four more to the strongly agree with ten and seven agree and one disagree. This is a significant change that shows a shift after the class in the intentional aspect of discipleship and parenting. This question

represents more of a change in behavior than an emotional response like in question three discussed above. Throughout the class, intentionality was discussed and encouraged. So, out of the eighteen responses only one disagreed with this question on the follow-up survey to being intentional in demonstrating a task or life lesson to their children.

Intentionality is a major aspect for parents disciplining their children. Planning ahead and being proactive in disciplining our children is important. Having ten participants strongly agree with this statement and only one of eighteen who disagreed was an encouraging development. Life is busy, especially with children, and the window can close quickly if a parent does not put a little forethought into discipleship. Here again, the church could take advantage of this community and highlight the importance of playing catch with a football and teaching your child how to punt. This concept of connecting with our children works for any sport.

Question six states; "I often think about the Great Commission and how it applies to parenting." Here are the results from the initial survey; two strongly agree, six agree, six neutral, three disagree, and one strongly disagree. The following are the results from the follow-up survey; five strongly agree, eight agree, three neutral and two disagree. This was one of several questions that included a response from every category. The answers were all over the scale and ten of the initial survey responses were neutral or below. I believe this is because most of the class did not have a good

understanding of what the Great Commission was and did not consider it in the context of parenting. For further evidence, please see the follow-up survey's fill-in answers.²

Prior to the third class, I offered a prize to the first person to respond to telling me where in the Bible the Great Commission was and what it said. I had to really push for an answer. For the past two weeks, I taught about the Great Commission in great detail and the Bible verse from Matthew was in their manual. I was pleased to see that in the follow-up survey there was a major shift to a total of thirteen who marked strongly agree or agree and only three were neutral and two disagree about how The Great Commission applied to parenting. For example, on the follow up survey one person said, "I never really thought of parenting considered to be discipling, (it) never connected."³

I learned that the Great Commission was not a general concept that most of the participants engaged in prior to the class. In the initial survey over half of the participants answered either neutral or below. The Great Commission was not understood by this class at the beginning. In fact, The Great Commission is a part of the mission statement in the denomination that we are in. As been said by many before me, "The Great Commission has become the great omission". The encouraging news is there was a major swing recorded on the follow-up survey as thirteen out of eighteen either agreed or strongly agreed that The Great Commission can be a helpful resource when discipling children.

² Appendix E Follow-Up Survey fill in answers, page 153.

³ Appendix E Follow-Up Survey fill in answers question # 1, page 153.

Question seven is; "I let my child watch me do a task and then let them do the same task." Here are the results from the initial survey; five strongly agree, seven agree, five neutral and one disagree. The follow-up survey showed; nine strongly agree, six agree, one neutral and two disagree. This question was looking to measure the fifth principle from Robert Coleman and that was demonstration. After the class there were four more participants who strongly agreed with this statement than before the class started. I am not sure why there were two who surveyed disagreed with this statement. However, there were none who strongly disagreed on the follow-up.

From these results on question seven I learned that parents and grandparents can be taught the importance of life-style discipleship. When parents can see the value of demonstrating a task to their children instead of doing it themselves long term growth can be achieved. It has been my experience as a pastor it is easier to do a task by myself instead of involving other people. However, in the long run demonstration is an investment in a life. So, it appears the four sessions helped shift the overall class to considering demonstrating life skills and, hopefully, spiritual disciplines on to their children.

For this class I started with basic life skills that need taught to children. There is a difference between sweeping the floor and showing your child how to do it versus giving your child a broom and telling them what to do without any demonstration. For the class, this is where we started so the participants could understand the concept. However, this was just the beginning because much emphasis was on the spiritual life of the parent or grandparent and how important it was for them to demonstrate a

consistent devotional life. As stated in the class on a consistent basis, you cannot give away something you do not have. Here again I realize that four sessions do not make up for years of bad habits. However, I thought it was important to show parents the principles taught in this class.

Question eight is; "I often get discouraged because of the way I have raised my child/children." On both the initial and follow up survey the participants had four on strongly agree and eight on agree. So, there was no change in this category in regards to agreeing to this statement which is understandable in such a short study. However, the big change happened in the responses under the category for neutral and disagree. For the initial survey there were five responses for neutral and one disagree. The big change in the follow-up survey was there was one neutral, four disagree and one strongly disagree. It appears the class helped parents and grandparents become less discouraged after taking the class.

I believe one possible reason for there being no shift on the strongly agree and agree column of the survey would be because there were ten participants who had adult children. So the way they raised their children would not have changed during the time of the sessions. However, my best conclusion for the reason of the major shift from five neutral to one and from one disagree to four disagree and from zero strongly agree to one strongly agree would be because now the parents have some parenting tools they can now use.

Question ten was designed to help measure the participant's understanding of life-style discipleship. Here is the question; "Taking my child/children to the grocery

store can be a great time of discipleship.” I was surprised there was only one that stated strongly disagree on the initial survey. Here are the rest of the responses from the initial survey; five strongly agree, ten agree and two were neutral. There was a major swing of a total of ten in the follow-up survey that strongly agreed to this statement. My initial thought was there would not have been fifteen out of eighteen that would have agreed with this statement. To finish the follow-up survey results there were six who agreed and two who were neutral.

I learned that this class session did have an impact on life-style discipleship. After studying and trying to live a life-style of discipleship to the best of my ability for many years I tend to take this simple and life changing concept for granted. However, when I first learned the concept it was a major revelation for me. It appears from the major shift in this survey that even taking a child to the store can be a great discipleship experience.

In the last part of the follow up survey, fill in question number five addresses the issue of life-style discipleship. Here is question number five, “Prior to this class have you heard of Life-Style discipleship or Life-Style evangelism? Out of the seventeen responses there were only four who answered yes. There were two follow up questions. The first was, “If so what was your understanding of it prior to and after the class?” The second was, “What is your understanding now?” Here were several comments that were encouraging, “it is a daily task”, “also applies to families”, “it’s a constant, daily matter of teaching, including and encouraging”, “we have to be constantly aware and

deliberate in our actions,” and “disciple and or evangelize by just living a Christ centered life”. For a more complete list please see appendix E.⁴

For a point of clarification one participant did not answer any questions on the second page for the follow up survey. Since the surveys were coded I did not have any way to follow up with them to complete the survey. So for questions 11-20 I only have seventeen responses for the follow up survey.

Question thirteen states; “Serving God with my child/children is/are a goal in my life.” Here are the results from the initial survey; eleven strongly agree, and seven agree. This indicates that prior to the session all of the participants indicated this was a goal. This does not indicate how effective this goal is but that they have the desire to do it. The follow up survey results were as follows; fourteen strongly agree, seven agree and one neutral. So after the class there was a shift towards strongly agree. I hope parents will strengthen their church and family by spending time with their children in the context of serving in the church.

Question nineteen states; “I have a consistent time of devotions with my child/children.” The initial survey breakdown is; zero strongly agree, two agree, eight neutral, five disagree and three strongly disagree. Here are the follow-up survey results; eight agree, four neutral, three disagree and two strongly disagree. The results from this question were inspiring. There were six more people after taking the class that agreed with this statement. Also, before the class there were a total of sixteen participant responses that were either neutral (eight), disagree (five) and strongly disagree (three).

⁴ Appendix E Follow-Up Survey fill in answers question # 5, pages 155-157

The response from this question was the biggest jump of any question in the survey. Does this mean that they were doing the tool times and considered to answer this question in the affirmative do to this factor? Another interesting thing to note is that there was not one person in either survey who answered strongly agree.

The responses to the questions on page three of the follow-up survey is back up to eighteen. There are three exceptions and they are questions 26, 27 and 28. One participant did not answer these three questions, this is why there will only be seventeen responses to these three questions.

Question twenty-one states; "I do not know how to raise my child/children how God wants me to." The initial survey brought the following answers; two strongly agree, five agree, three neutral, seven disagree and one strongly disagree. In contrast, here are the responses to the follow-up survey; zero strongly agree, one agree, three neutral, thirteen disagree and one strongly agree. As you can see by the movement only one participant agreed with this statement on the follow-up survey and the fourteen disagree or strongly disagree. I think this question helps indicate that the class did fulfill some of its objectives of teaching parents the value of discipleship in the home.

This question is another indication of the positive response the participants had to the combination of discipleship and tying it to The Great Commission in regards to parenting. There was only one participant who agreed to not knowing how to raise their child as God intended. So, it appears the class did meet a major goal of the class. This was a major victory for this writer and for this project. It encourages me to teach this seminar on a consistent basis in our church and community.

Question twenty-four is; "If given resources and some guidelines I would be willing to focus on applying them with my child/children for thirty days." I was confused by the response and not sure of the results. For the initial survey, ten strongly agree, seven agree, one neutral, zero disagree and zero strongly disagree. For the follow up survey seven strongly agree, nine agree, two neutral, zero disagree and zero strongly disagree.

The results of question seems to be consistent with other findings in this survey (see question 15) that people would overwhelming strongly agree with this statement. The shift from the strongly agree response from ten before the class to seven on the follow-up is hard to understand. Could it be people responded in the way they want to live yet when it comes to actually being consistent of doing it there is a disconnect? Could there be an ideal the parents are looking for but when it comes down to doing it then it is a different story? Could parents look for the quick and easy way to raise their children without putting the necessary time and effort any successful adventure needs?

As indicated in the last chapter questions twenty-six, twenty-seven and twenty-eight are the new Likert questions on the follow-up survey. These three questions were important to this project.

First, here is question number twenty-six; "During the lessons on the Great Commission, Discipleship and Parenting, I was able to work on the eight principles taught." Here are the results; five strongly agree, seven agree, two neutral, three disagree and zero strongly agree. About seventy-five percent of the participants were able to agree on this question. Question twenty four asked the same question before

the study began in a slightly different way and it was ninety four percent. So there is a disconnect here. One possible explanation could be the fact of the high number of participants who have older or adult children. From knowing the make-up of the class I think this is a plausible reason.

The second question on the follow-up survey that is new is number twenty seven, and it says; "After taking this class and working on the "tool times" I am better prepared to disciple my child/children." Here is the response; seven strongly agree, nine agree, one neutral, zero disagree and zero strongly disagree. The results of the response to this question was very pleasing to this writer! In other words, ninety-four percent of the participants agreed with the tool times helping them to be better prepared for discipling their children. Only one was neutral and I cannot interpret this lone response.

Question twenty-eight states; "I am committed to the life-style approach to discipleship with my child/children, which will include focused prayer for them." Here are the results; thirteen strongly agree, four agree, zero neutral, zero disagree and zero strongly agree. So, like the previous question this question indicates the class got the importance of the principles taught. How much better our society would be if parents would have a life-style approach to discipleship and to include focused prayers for them.

Failure and Successes

As I was preparing the material for starting the sessions I began to realize something I did not realize before. There were many parents who were having major conflicts with their children. Some were parents who had children who were finishing

High School or who have recently moved out. I was amazed at the hurt and desperation they were in. Since I only heard the parent's side of the story I am not sure of the children's perspective. So, I think there is a great need for teaching on resolution between parents and children. This project would be for those parents with older children who need help reconnecting with their children.

It is best to start discipling your child the day (or even before, which is another thesis project) you bring them home from the hospital. However, as what was brought to my attention in great detail and pain, there is a great need for parents to either claim for the first time or reclaim the hearts of the teenage or older children. If I did not pursue this project I would not have known of the magnitude of the problem.

As I was writing my thesis I was focused on parents with young children. However, this was not the majority of the participants in my class. Another drawback was I did not include in my survey the ages of the children we were dealing with or the ages of the participants. Also, I originally did not see the deep attachments the parents of the children had with their own parents.

The level of influence and the amount of time the grandparents have with their grandchildren seemed to be a major cultural emphasis in this community. The reason for my lack of awareness could be I have not lived in the same community with my parents and my children's grandparents. But it seems the grandparents have the grandchildren as much if not more than the parents. This was one reason I invited some grandparents into the class who did not initially sign up for the class. Another reason is

(as noted in this chapter) many parents with younger children did not attend the classes.

A short-coming of this project I see is the follow up process and looking at long term results. These parents will be a major focus for me, however, taking much more time in the long term would be best for this project. This is one reason why George Barna's book, *Revolutionary Parenting*, was so helpful for my study, because his study was based on a long time frame, with the children being young adults for the survey.

Another lesson I learned, but did not realize it until I was in the middle of the sessions, was how *The Master Plan of Evangelism's* eight principles could be broken down into two sections; foundations and application. It actually occurred to me while I was talking to parents and grandparents who seemed like they did not have the foundations aspect of their relation with their children.

First, I began to realize the first four principles were foundational to the discipling process of our children, they are; Selection, Association, Consecration and Impartation. They are all building blocks to the discipling process. As mentioned in the Biblical principles, "Theology of Admonition to Keep the Hearts of Our Children", not only do we need to keep the hearts of our children, we must have them in the first place. The early years of parenting are important to the discipling process.

The second set of eight principles I began to see as the application of the foundations of principles one through four. The next four principles are; Demonstration, Delegation, Supervision and Reproduction. Here again, if the relationship is not established in the younger years it more difficult for a parent to apply these principles

later. Please know that if we missed these years as parents due to any reason, a parent can still establish the relationship with older children. It will not be as natural as if the parents started from the beginning of life with their child but there is still hope.

From the results of my study it appears that teaching the eight principles from *The Master Plan of Evangelism* was effective in giving tools to the parents and it produced the positive results indicated in the surveys. Also, I think it would be helpful if I do develop another class for parents of older children to establish or reestablish the foundational aspect of their relationship with their children.

From my experience and research, I know that if parents do not have the heart of their child the teenage years will be rough for all members in the family. As already mentioned in this research, growth and personality is like concrete and the early years of a child's life is the time of major development. If the concrete dries without love and support it is hard to reshape the framework of the concrete. Of course, with God's intervention any heart can be changed.

There was no survey question to determine the hurt of some of the parents with older children. I found this out in several of the makeup sessions. The sessions were in the summer and for some participants I had one-on-one sessions to get the information in sequence. I believe the information that was taught in this project would also do well in a smaller amount of people. When I taught the sessions one-on-one I was able to get more feedback from the participant. I realize being the pastor of the church helps people confide in me and tell me things they would not share in a larger group.

How will these outcomes affect your ministry?

Question two showed on the initial survey that one-third of the class was not raised in a Christian home. As already noted, the participants who participated in this study considered themselves to be Christians. (see question 1). It may indicate that there is a great potential for educational opportunities for those who answered neutral and below when asked about being raised in a Christian home. (question 2).

Questions fourteen and twenty-one also leads to the importance of possible other education opportunities. Five participants in the initial survey indicated they either strongly agreed or agree that they have not been taught in Biblical principles in parenting. In like manner, in question twenty-one in the initial survey seven participants agreed strongly or agreed to not knowing how to raise their child how God wants them to.

For me question twenty-two puts together in a defining way when seventeen out of eighteen participants strongly agreed or agreed to the statement, "I would like to be disciplined so I could disciple my child/children". This confirms my initial hypothesis that parents want to disciple their children they just do not know how. So, placing questions two, fourteen, twenty and twenty-one together there is evidence to continue to teach the methods of this class in this community on a continuing basis. There appears to be an obvious need to pursue these findings.

Where will this take us?

Pursuing a schedule that allows for a systematic teaching of this class would be helpful to this community. I believe it would be best to start in the local church and have

class time, prayer time and open discussion time. When we had time for open discussion at our tables these seem to be go very well. I could see the examples that a participant would share with their table embraced by the group. There was good discussion among some of the grandparents in the group that was helpful to the younger parents.

This should lead us naturally into friends and family of those in the church. We could publicize it as a parenting support group or some other helpful class that our church could help sponsor. The key to this approach would be to keep it relevant to the needs of the community and words like, "the great commission", "discipleship" would not be used like they were in a believers' setting. As stated above, appeal to the sports centered community.

Lessons learned

There was one major lesson I learned from this project that the surveys did not indicate but will be of great importance for my future ministry. During this project there were several of the classes, especially the large Wednesday night class, I got the impression the class was grasping the information being taught.

As I look back on the process this is what I think happened. I was excited and committed to not only this project but the things that were being taught. I spent a lot of time and energy preparing for every class. I truly thought the lessons would be life changing and life altering for both parent and child. When I didn't sense the same response and see any result before, during or after the class I made some wrong conclusions.

My initial conclusion before I looked at any of the surveys were, this class is just like all the other research I saw and the parents really don't take discipling their children seriously. Also, Christian parents do not have any clear cut objective to raising their children, they just flow with the culture and do what their non-Christian neighbors do. Also, their worldview is the same as the non-Christian. This was my mind set for the last two weeks of the classes.

I did not look at any initial survey during the time I was teaching the class. In fact, I waited for several weeks after the class to analysis the data because I thought I knew what the results were going to be. I was not expecting much success for the project. So, I do not know if this is typical but all of the data I looked at was not at all what I thought was going to happen. I was pleasantly surprised by the final results!

The classes were nice and everyone was pleasant but what I took for apathy most likely was the participants looking at material and thoughts they never had considered before. I have lived and breathed the things I taught for many years. I was so excited to share my findings and resources with my church. No matter what happened in the class, the participants could not have had the same background coming into the class and the level of excitement I had.

There were two major staring points one for the writer and one for the participants and we were not on the same starting line. So my expectations were nowhere on any chart. For example, question thirteen came out my current life experience. We have three teenage boys, (our youngest will be thirteen soon). The oldest is going to college next year. The boys and my wife and I are the Worship Band

for our Church. We are enjoying serving God together! Any opportunity we have to include the boys in ministry is an exciting adventure.

I had a lot of preconceived expectations coming in to these sessions. I saw many families struggling to serve God together and I knew this could be a great opportunity for all who attended the class. I was excited to share these sessions with the class because I knew they could help parents and the children.

This experience has shown in a deeper way not to place a high degree of importance on short-term emotions and outward reactions. I put a lot of emphasis on the initial reaction I missed the long term results that may happen. I may have misread a person's far off glance, now realizing that possibly they were thinking about the information they were receiving.

Imagine my reaction when I started looking at the results from the surveys! I thought people were not understanding the principle, and were not incorporating them into their lives. It reminds me of the verse in 1 Samuel 6:7, "The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

I have taught and preached thousands of times in my eighteen years of ministry. I have never given surveys after any of these adventures. So the results of the surveys indicated to me some pleasant concrete results that in a typical week I do not get this type of feedback.

For me, the principles I taught have been a way of life. I need to step back and let God's word penetrate the hearts of people. Inwardly I should not get stuck on short term reactions and moods and focus on the long-term goals of any project.

I can see now that I placed a lot on how successful I felt by the reaction of the participants. These feelings will never catch up with what I sense inside and joy of helping people see the need of The Great Commission and discipleship. I am grateful for a little glimpse of hope that the material appeared to teach.

What else needs to be done?

Another avenue this study revealed to me was the great need for parents who missed the window of opportunity to disciple their children when they were younger. I heard the heartbreak in their stories as they shared their emotional distance from their children. I believe the focus of the class needs to be on the parents of young children there also needs to be another class for parents of older children. For this class great care needs to be of great hope and restoration and how God can make all things new. As indicated before I did not see this great need until after I started the class and parents with other children opened up about their circumstance.

I believe a discipleship network of parents should be developed for this church and community. I found some strong and committed discipling grandparents in this process who could disciple in the ways described in this class. They could disciple the parents so, in return, the parents could disciple their children.

There were several families with young children who originally signed up to take the four sessions offered. One by one, before the sessions started they were unable to

attend the seminars. This involved four families that I thought could really benefit from this project. So, I believe the people who participated in this class were truly committed to their children. The ones who couldn't make it will make a good core of people when I teach another class.

I believe a consistent effort of encouraging parents to have devotions with their children will be a major emphasis on what we need to do next. Question nineteen in the follow-up revealed to me the lack of devotions that the adults are having with their children. From all indications from this project the participants know the importance of being spiritual active in the lives of their children. However, knowing it and doing it are two different things. As the pastor of this congregation I will be very intentional of incorporating the importance of family devotions from the pulpit.

Closing Thoughts

Overall, this project exceeded my greatest expectations, though in ways that were totally unknown to me prior to the class. I was looking forward to the light bulb moments in the lives of the participants during the session. I never got to see them. However, from the results of the surveys there was more going on in the mind of the participants than appeared in the classes.

I worked hard to provide for this project and prayed even harder. God once again showed me that His word never returns to Him void. May God be praised! Isaiah 55:10-11 reads, "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will

not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."

So, basically this project was taking Biblical principles and applying them to parenting. God's truth always cuts through the hurt and pain of life and gives us new hope. Through the process of this project there was not a person who learned more and who is more grateful that God has truly given us the resources to care for all of His children.

Discipling Our Children

A study for parents and Christians who nurture
God's children

By

Pastor Tom Schwind

Participant Name: _____

Survey Code: _____

Discipling our Children

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Session 1

What principles of the Master Plan of Evangelism can help parents disciple their children?

For the next thirty days you will have **eight principles** to develop with your child/children. My hope is you will develop some **life-style discipleship** aspects to your life. For the next four weeks we will cultivate these principles in our group time. These principles we are teaching are a lifestyle of discipleship.

One month does not make a life but can help to **form goals and habits**. Due to the pace of this class we will give all of the principles in the first class. However, the tool times will be spread out during the class times so you will have a week to do two principles with the intent to bring back your experiences to the next class.

TOOL TIME #1: Selection

(He chose from them twelve) Luke 6:13

Thank God for the gift of your children. Pray over them tonight when they are sleeping. 1) Bless them as they sleep. 2) Hug them and tell them you love them daily. 3) Thank God that he has placed your child/children in your life. If your children are out of the house still pray for them, and tell them you have done so, and do the steps above. If they are out of the house make a phone call or send a card.

TOOL TIME #2: Association

(Lo, I am with you always) Matthew 28:20

What can you do with your child that you normally do by yourself? Make an effort to intentionally include your child(ren) on one activity this week. One-on-one time is important to you and your child. Commit to a monthly breakfast, lunch or dinner out with your child.

TOOL TIME #3: Consecration

(Take my yoke upon you) Matthew 11:29

You are the parent and the God-given authority for your child. Examine your interaction with your child/children. Do your children obey? If not what steps can you make?

TOOL TIME #4: Impartation

(Receive the Holy Spirit) John 20:22

We cannot teach what we do not know or live. Are you filled with the presence of God's Holy Spirit? How is your devotional life? Read the Bible reading plan that was given to you with your child/children during these thirty days. If your child/children are/ is not old enough to understand use a children's Bible. Consistency is important.

TOOL TIME #5: Demonstration

(I have given you an example) John 13:15

Plan one activity this week demonstrating to your child a needed life skill or lesson. Example: Household chores are a great opportunity to teach an attitude of serving others in love.

TOOL TIME #6: Delegation

(I will make you fishers of men) Matthew 4:19

Now give your child the assignment you did in the demonstration step above to do on their own. (age appropriate.) Do you have older children? How about mowing the

lawn, washing/waxing the car. (wax on, wax off). At this stage I would suggest real life activities, the serving aspect will come.

TOOL TIME #7: Supervision

(Do ye not yet perceive?) Mark 8:17

Follow up on the demonstration and delegation activity stated above.

TOOL TIME # 8: Reproduction

(Go and bring forth fruit) John 15:16

If you have several children, have your oldest child teach a younger child the activities demonstrated and delegated by you. NOTE: This can be a very simple task like some easy household task. Or it could be some other age appropriate activity. By reproduction I am talking about having more children or grandchildren!!

I'm praying for you!

TOOL TIME #1: Selection

When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them..."

Luke 6:13

Thank God for the gift of your children and the children in your life.

Pray over them tonight when they are sleeping:

- 1) Bless them as they sleep.
- 2) Hug them and tell them you love them daily.
- 3) Thank God that he has placed your child/children in your life.
- 4) If your children are out of the house still pray for them, and tell them you have done so, and do the steps above. If they are out of the house make a phone call or send a card.

Children God has chosen to put in my life: (children, grandchildren, nephews, nieces, friend's children)

Let's do this together!

TOOL TIME #2: Association

"...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:20

What can you do with your child that you normally do by yourself? Make an effort to intentionally include your child(ren) on one activity this week. One-on-one time is important to you and your child. Commit to a monthly breakfast, lunch or dinner out with your child.

Ideas:

Things I Normally Do Alone

Ways I Could Include My Child

I commit to:

SESSION 2

What are some biblical principles to help parents raise their children?

This lesson will discuss seven key Scriptural passages that are applicable to the Great Commission, discipleship and parenting.

1) The Great Commission For Parents:

The Great Commission is Jesus' command to all Christians. I believe "all nations" starts within our homes with our family. We are called to make disciples of our children. We start with those with in our homes.

Matthew 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

2) The Role of Humility and Admonition in Discipleship:

Jesus states welcoming a child is the same as welcoming him. I believe Jesus is talking about all children, especially our own flesh and blood. He also warns about misleading children and causing them to sin. This puts a tremendous responsibility and privilege on parents.

Matthew 18:5-6 "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

3) What is Life-style Discipleship?

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 paints a clear picture of the importance of the parent and child relationship in regards to training in the things of God. We are to disciple our children in the context of life. Life-style discipleship is a clear commandment from God's Word.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

4) The Importance of Parents Training their Children:

The Bible tells us we are to train our children in the way they are to go. The training is not to be left up to others. Other options are available but under the direction of the parent. Here is a wonderful principle from God and the relationship parents have with their children in regards to their training.

Proverbs 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

5) God's Word Warns Us to Keep the Hearts of Our Children:

What happens when fathers do not have their hearts on their children? Could we be in a time of curse on this land of ours due to the way our nation has abandoned the Biblical principles of parenting?

Malachi 4:5-6 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

6) God's Provisions:

Children are a reward from God. God is in the house-building business! God will help us in the task of discipleship.

Psalms 127:1-5 Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat — for he grants sleep to those he loves. Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.

7) The Role of Family Service to God:

Parents are to fear the Lord and serve Him in faithfulness. People like Joshua and others in the Bible are great examples of fear and faithfulness as families serve the Lord together.

Josh 24:14-15 "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the

Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household,
we will serve the LORD."

Let's get our roles straight

TOOL TIME #3: Consecration

"Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Matthew 11:29

You are the parent and the God-given authority for your child.

Examine your interaction with your child/children.

Do your children obey?

If not, what steps can you make?

Let's read the Bible together!

TOOL TIME #4: Impartation

And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

John 20:22

We cannot teach what we do not know or live.

Are you filled with the presence of God's Holy Spirit?

How is your devotional life?

My Commitment:

- Read the Bible together
- Use the reading plan that was given to you during these thirty days
- If your children are small use a children's Bible.
- Consistency is the key – set a time above and stick with it

Bedtime is usually a great time for this since children love to drag out bedtime and can set your child up with a sense of peace before lights out. Be sure your children know these are not "stories" but the true written record of God.

The Toddler's Bible by V. Gilbert Beers

Gold and Honey Bible by Melody Carlson

SESSION 3

What resources are there for parents who want to disciple their children according to biblical principles?

This session focuses on resources on discipleship, the Great Commission and parenting. I will give a brief description of the books. For further depth, please see chapter three of this thesis project. Parents will all be at different stages in life and Christian depth, so a brief survey will be discussed in this lesson.

Four major concepts are dominant in regards to discipling children:

Bible Reading and Application:

Praying for Your Children:

Family Worship:

Life-style Discipleship:

Discipleship Resources

Disciplemaking: A Self-Study Course on Follow-up and Discipleship by Robert E. Coleman, with Timothy Beougher and Tim Phillips, eds., (Billy Graham Center, 1994). I used this book for leadership development with a discipleship group and a sermon series. I can say from a first-hand experience it is very effective to disciple other people. The book gives a **step by step approach to discipling** that is easily transferred to parents.

The Master Plan of Discipleship by Robert Coleman is the follow-up to the book *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. The book takes a look at the book of Acts and how discipleship was done by the early church.

The Master Plan of Evangelism by Robert Coleman was discussed in great detail in session one.

The Great Commission Resources

Prayer Evangelism: How to Change the Spiritual Climate over your Home, Neighborhood and City by Ed Silvos. The premise of the book is “talking to God about our neighbors before we talk to our neighbors about God.”¹ The main Scriptures the author uses is Luke 10:5, 6, 8, 9. “When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God is near you.”

The four points he takes from this text are: **First, speak peace to them; second, fellowship with them; third, take care of their needs; fourth, proclaim the good news.**²

The author then tells of the importance of Matthew 28:18, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” The author states, “A text without its context becomes a pretext. When we look at this verse (Matthew 28:19) isolated from its context, the weight of fulfilling the Great Commission comes to rest exclusively on our shoulders.”³

The Great Commission Lifestyle by Robert Coleman takes the Great Commission from Matthew 28:18-20 and breaks it into three major areas. First, is the affirmation that all authority in heaven and earth is Jesus’. Second is the mandate of making disciples in all nations. Lastly, is the promise of the Holy Spirit. This book would be a good start to get an overview of the Great Commission.

The Mind of the Master by Robert Coleman. The following quote sets the context for the entire book, “**Genuine witness is but the reflection of Christian experience.** It can neither be worked up through emotional appeals nor engineered through clever organization. Hence, to the degree that we share the mind of Christ, and feel His passion for the Kingdom-to that degree His ministry comes alive.”⁴

I know it is important in life to understand what is important to a person. This book describes the inner life and thoughts of Jesus by looking at what he said and did during his short life on this earth, as we know it. This book was written within the context of His Great Commission.

¹Ed Silvos, *Prayer Evangelism* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2000), 33.

²Ed Silvos, *Prayer Evangelism*, 37.

³Ed Silvos, *Prayer Evangelism*, 59.

⁴Robert E. Coleman, *The Mind of the Master* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2000), 15.

Focusing on what Jesus focused on is the obvious starting point for the Great Commission. As follower, we too are called to be heavenly focused

Out of the Saltshaker and into the World by Rebecca Pippert's is a book about **lifestyle evangelism**. On several occasions the author contrasts what a project is versus the lifestyle approach. The project approach is turning on and off your Christian witness when the timing is right. The lifestyle approach is the natural way of evangelism and the way Jesus did evangelism. Obviously, the lifestyle approach would be best for discipling our children. Our children are way beyond just a project!

Authenticity and obedience is far more valuable than thinking you need to have all the answers.

Parenting and Discipleship Resources

God, Marriage and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation by Andreas Kostenberger, is one of the standard books on God, Marriage and family. The book details God's design for families from a Biblical perspective. I would highly recommend a reading of this entire book. For our discussion on discipleship and parenting here are four areas to focus on.

- 1-family worship, devotions, Bible Study,
- 2- maintaining family traditions
- 3-engage in wholesome activities
- 4-Spiritual Warfare, there is an enemy,

The Power of a Praying Parent by Stormie Omartian is a good resource for all parents. The author writes about the importance of spiritual warfare and being aware there is an enemy who wants to attack the God-given institution of marriage and parenting. This book goes on to discuss many culturally relevant issues and goes in great detail on marriage and the family. It is saturated with Scripture.

One of Omartian's key attributes of discipleship is prayer. Jesus constantly prayed for His disciples. (John 17) This book stresses the importance of praying for our children. The author details about thirty areas of prayer in regards to children. She stresses that no matter how old your children are it is important to be praying for your children. After being convinced of the importance of praying for her children she did not have peace about the constant need for daily prayer for her children. She knew God wanted to have her constantly put her children in God's hands. "This didn't mean that we would now abdicate all responsibility as parents. Rather, we would declare ourselves to be in full partnership with God. He would shoulder the heaviness of the burden and provide wisdom, power, protection and ability far beyond ourselves."⁵

Omartian went on to say that there is still the responsibility to teach and nurture their children. However, there was a release of stress knowing God was now involved in

⁵Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Parent* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1995), 16.

parenting. “An important part of our job was to **keep the details of our child’s life covered in prayer**”.⁶

She also stressed the importance of not praying for her will to be done but the importance of God’s will in all prayers for her children. She writes, “I have found it’s better to pray more along the lines of “Lord, show me how to pray for this child. Help me to raise him Your way, and may Your will be done in his life.”⁷

Here is a good definition of prayer that is useful in the context of parenting and discipleship; “Prayer is acknowledging and experiencing the presence of God and inviting His presence into our lives and circumstances. It’s seeking the presence of God and releasing the power of God which gives us the means to overcome any problem.”⁸

Revolutionary Parenting: What the Research Shows Really Works by George Barna is based on research of parents who raised strong Christian children and the children who Barna considered revolutionary. He also came to the conclusion that the Biblical principles are the best advice on how to disciple a child.

Barna describes three types of parenting. The first type of parenting is parenting by default. Second, is the experimental (trial and error). Last, is the Revolutionary Parenting which is the model that would be the opposite of the first parenting model.

Revolutionary Parenting is using God’s Word as the basis of parenting, which would be the disciplining your child with the Christian worldview and the purpose of being obedient to God.

He calls these children spiritual champions who have a biblical worldview, moral absolutes and believe God has created them. They also are service-oriented wanting to impact their world. Barna writes,

By spiritual champions, I mean individuals who have embraced Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord; accept the Bible as truth and as the guide for life; and to seek to live in obedience to its principles and in search of ways to continually deepen their relationship with God. Spiritual champions live in ways that are noticeably different from the norm-even when compared to the average churchgoer.⁹

⁶Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Parent*, 16.

⁷Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Parent*, 17.

⁸Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Parent*, 18.

⁹George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting: What the Research Shows Really Works*, xvi.

What was very clear from the research is there were no set rules or predetermined formula for successful discipleship of our children. The research was clear that there was a consistency in the parents' spiritual life to Jesus and this was caught by their children.

Barna used the analogy of the coach to help describe Biblical parenting. Aspects such as clear goals, strong relationships, and a complete investment of time are good examples of coaching.

The surveys from the grown children who were considered spiritual champions stressed a common mistake their parents made were not spending enough time with them and the number one failure was the parents did not provide appropriate discipline.

Let me show you how!

TOOL TIME #5: Demonstration

"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."

John 13:15

Plan one activity this week demonstrating to your child a needed life skill or lesson.

Example: Household chores are a great opportunity to teach an attitude of serving others in love. Be sure the activity is age-appropriate – see Tool Time #6. Slice a banana with a butter knife for fruit salad for small child. Pick up sticks in the yard.

Brainstorm Ideas with the Class:

My Plan and Commitment:

How it went:

Now you give it a try!

TOOL TIME #6: Delegation

"Come follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Matthew 4:19

Now give your child the assignment you did in the demonstration step above to do on their own.

Do you have older children? How about mowing the lawn, washing/waxing the car. (wax on, wax off). At this stage I would suggest real life activities, the serving aspect will come. Be sure it is age appropriate.

My Commitment:

How It Went:

What I would do differently next time:

SESSION 4

How can the church help train parents to disciple their children?

1) Provide the parents with the training and support and the tools

- Have children and adults doing the same study and encourage them to do it together at home.
- Support groups
- Teach and preach the Biblical concepts (see below)

A fact that Barna's research showed was that the greatest impact the church had on the children was **impacting the children's parents**. The reason for this is because as the research indicates and the Bible clearly teaches, it is the parents who have the most influence on their child. (Barna)

On pages 122-124 in the book *Revolutionary Parenting* by George Barna, he lists Biblical passages the revolutionary parents recommended to teach their children. He states, "A parent should teach foundational Christian doctrine and theological views, but also need to connect to life outcomes for children to embrace."

2) Provide opportunities to serve

Barna writes “Parents are more successful if they genuinely love God, pray daily, worship regularly, read the Bible habitually for personal development, participate in the life of spiritual community and apply their resources, spiritual gifts, and natural abilities frequently to influencing lives”.¹⁰

To raise spiritual champions emphasize:

- Serving together as a family
- Praying
- Bible study
- Worship

¹⁰ Barna, George, *Revolutionary Parenting: What the Research Shows Really Works*, 103.

3) Teach the parents the importance of their role.

Barna's research showed that the greatest impact the church had on the children was to impact the _____. The reason for this is the parents have the most influence on their child as the research indicates and the Bible clearly teaches.

The author indicated that rarely is a 100% response recorded in any study. However, in this study one important common theme did receive a 100% response on the surveys.

"The most important focus of their children's training was the development of _____."¹¹

The research that Barna has done in *Revolutionary Parenting* also shows the role of the Church is to _____ the parents rather than be the _____ of instruction to the children.¹² Barna explains, "In short, Revolutionary Parents believe they are _____ from day one, behave like people who are in charge, and never allow doubts to linger as to who is in charge."¹³

Once again, the people who this study surveyed are parents who were successful in discipling their children. It confirms the Biblical mandate of parents taking the responsibility for discipling their children. Bible study and prayer were found to be most effective when modeling. In fact _____% learn from this modeling.¹⁴

Salvation was important to all of the parents who were surveyed. Barna states: "most of them opted for a lifelong emphasis upon _____ rather than evangelism. The ideal stance may be a combination of both, (evangelism and discipleship) but the bottom line is that evangelism without _____ is spiritual abuse".¹⁵

¹¹George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 46.

¹²George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 56.

¹³George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 83.

¹⁴George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 97.

¹⁵George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting*, 110.

How are you doing?

TOOL TIME #7: Supervision

Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand?"

Mark 8:17

What my child did well:

What my child needs help on:

What I modeled well as we worked together:

What I could have modeled better:

Answers to fill in the blanks for Session 4: children's parents, godly character, reinforce, sole provider, in charge, 60%, discipleship, discipleship

Show your little brother how!

(Or sister, or cousin)

TOOL TIME #8: Reproduction

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."

John 15:16

If you have several children, have your oldest child teach a younger child the activities demonstrated and delegated by you.

NOTE: This can be a very simple task like some easy household task. Or it could be some other age appropriate activity. By reproduction I am not talking about having more children or grandchildren!!

Setting up the older child to succeed:

My Commitment:

How it went:



Recommended Scripture Reading List

Taken from Barna's Revolutionary Parenting (pages 122-124)

The Creation account (Genesis 1-2)
The seduction of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3)
Moses and the burning bush and Promised Land (Exodus 3)
Moses and the plagues (Exodus 5-12)
Moses and the Exodus (Exodus 12-14)
The Ten Commandments (Exodus 19-20)
David and Goliath (1 Samuel 16-17)
Solomon's rise and fall (I Kings 9-11)
Job's testing (Job)
The meaning of life (Ecclesiastes 3, 12)
Surviving the furnace (Daniel 3)
Surviving the lions' den (Daniel 6)
Jonah and the great fish (Jonah)
The temptations of Christ (Matthew 4:1-11)
Prayer (Matthew 6:5-15)
Judging people (Matthew 7:1-6)
The "Golden Rule" (Matthew 7:12)
Wealth and salvation (Matthew 19:16-30)
Servanthood (Matthew 20:20-28)
Chasing out the money changers (Matthew 21:12-13)
The greatest commandment (Matthew 22:34-40)
The Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-30)
Jesus' crucifixion (Matthew 27:57-28:15)
Jesus' resurrection (Matthew 27:57-28:15)
The great commission (Matthew 28:16-20)
The birth of Christ (Luke 1-2)
The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37)
Nicodemus and salvation (John 3:1-21)
The ascension of Christ (Acts 1:6-11)
The coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-13)
The early church (Acts 2)
Saul's conversion (Acts 9:1-30)
Falling short (Romans 3:9-31)
The wages of sin (Romans 6:23)
Spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12)

Love (1 Corinthians 13)

The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)

Faith in God (Hebrews 11)

Proverbs Teaches Values

Reading List

Another teaching tool would be use the book of Proverbs teaching positive attributes from the following list:

God, Marriage and Family Positive Attributes from the book of Proverbs. (Page 104)

diligence (6:6-11; 11:27; 12:24; 13:4; 15:19; 18:9; 19:24; 20:4,13; 21:5; 22:13; 26:13-16)

justice (11:1; 16:11; 17:23; 20:10,23; 31:8-9)

kindness (11:17)

generosity (11:24; 19:6)

self-control, particularly of speech (12:18; 13:3; 21:23) and temper (14:17,29; 15:18; 16:32; 19:11; 25:28)

righteousness (12:21,28; 14:34)

truthfulness and honesty (12:22; 16:13; 24:26)

discretion in choosing friends (13:20; 18:24), particularly a spouse (18:22; 31:10-31)

caution and prudence (14:16; 27:12)

gentleness (15:1,4)

contentment (15:16-17; 16:8; 17:1)

integrity of character (15:27; 28:18)

humility (16:19; 18:12; 22:4)

graciousness (16:24)

forthrightness (rather than duplicity; 16:30; 17:20)

restraint (17:14, 27-28; 18:6-7; 29:20)

faithfulness in friendship (17:17) and otherwise (28:20)

purity (20:9; 22:11)

vigorous pursuit of what is good and right (20:29)

skillfulness in work (22:29)

patience (25:15)

APPENDIX B

INITIAL SURVEY

INITIAL SURVEY

Participant Code: _____

1. I am a Christian.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

2. My parents raised me in a Christian home.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

3. Spending time with my child/children is a major priority for my life.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

4. I am intentional to demonstrate a task or life lesson to my child/children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

5. I am open to learning about tools to help me with my child/children spiritual life.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

6. I often think about The Great Commission and how it applies to parenting.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

7. I let my child watch me do a task and then let them do the same task.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

8. I often get discouraged because of the way I have raised my child/children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

9. I think a lot about my child's spiritual life.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

10. Taking my child/children to the grocery store can be a great time of discipleship.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

11. Keeping the heart of my child/children is an important principle to parenting.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

12. My child/children is/are a reward from God.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

13. Serving God with my child/children is/are a goal in my life.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

14. I do not understand or have not been taught Biblical principles way to parent my child/children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

15. If somebody could show me Biblical principles on how to raise my child/children I would be willing to learn as much as I could to be a better parent.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

16. I pray focused prayers for my child/children every day.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

17. All children are the same and what worked for one child works for them all, after all kids are kids.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

18. My spiritual life is important to my child's/children's spiritual life.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

19. I have a consistent time of devotions with my child/children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

20. The church should help equip parents to equip their children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

21. I do not know how to raise my child/children how God wants me to.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

22. I would like to be disciplined so-- I could discipline my child/ children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

23. The approach I use to raise my child/children is trial and error.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

24. If given resources and some guidelines I would be willing to focus on applying them with my child/children for 30 days.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

25. I need to start having devotions and reading age appropriate material with my child/children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

APPENDIX C

FOLLOW UP SURVEY

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

Participant Code: _____

1. I am a Christian.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

2. My parents raised me in a Christian home.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

3. Spending time with my child/children is a major priority for my life.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

4. I am intentional to demonstrate a task or life lesson to my children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

5. I am open to learning about tools to help me with my child/children spiritual life.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

6. I often think about The Great Commission and how it applies to parenting.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

7. I let my child watch me do a task and then let them do the same task.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

8. I often get discouraged because of the way I have raised my child/children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

9. I think a lot about my child's spiritual life.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

10. Taking my child/children to the grocery store can be a great time of discipleship.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

11. Keeping the heart of my child/children is an important principle to parenting.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

12. My child/children is/are a reward from God.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

13. Serving God with my child/children is/are a goal in my life.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

14. I do not understand or have not been taught Biblical principles way to parent my child/children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

15. If somebody could show me Biblical principles on how to raise my child/children I would be willing to learn as much as I could to be a better parent.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

16. I pray focused prayers for my child/children every day.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

17. All children are the same and what worked for one child works for them all, after all kids are kids.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

18. My spiritual life is important to my child's/children's spiritual life.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly
disagree

19. I have a consistent time of devotions with my child/children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly
disagree

20. The church should help equip parents to equip their children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly
disagree

21. I do not know how to raise my child/children how God wants me to.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly
disagree

22. I would like to be disciplined so I could disciple my child/ children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly
disagree

23. The approach I use to raise my child/children is trial and error.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly
disagree

24. If given resources and some guidelines I would be willing to focus on applying them with my child/children for 30 days.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

25. I need to start having devotions and reading age appropriate material with my child/children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

26. During the lessons on The Great Commission, Discipleship and parenting, I was able to work on the 8 principles taught.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

27. After taking this class and working on the "tool times" I am better prepared to disciple my child/children.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

28. I am committed to the life-style approach to discipleship with my child/children, which will include focused prayer for them.

____ strongly agree ____ agree ____ neutral ____ disagree ____ strongly disagree

1) What was most helpful to you in this class?

2) What was confusing and or unclear in this class?

3) What specific three things will you follow-through on as a result of this class?

4) Are there any specific topics you would have liked covered?

5) Prior to this class have you heard of Life-Style discipleship or Life-Style evangelism?

If so what was your understanding of it prior to and after the class?

What is your understanding now?

6) What specific things can your church do to help you disciple your child/children?

7) How can you transfer these principles to your grandchildren?

APPENDIX D
COLLATED SURVEY

Q #	SURVEY	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEUTRAL	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
1	initial follow up	5+5+1111 5+5+5+111	1111			
2	initial follow up	5+1 5	5+1 5+111	111 1	1 1	11 111
3	initial follow up	5+5+1 5+5+1111	5+11 1111			
4	initial follow up	5+1 5+5	5+5 5+11		11 1	
5	initial follow up	5+5+1111 5+5+111	1111 5			
6	initial follow up	11 5	5 +1 5+111	5+1 111	111 11	1
7	initial follow up	5 5+1111	5+11 5+1	5 1	11	1
8	initial follow up	1111 1111	5+111 5+111	5 1	1 1111	1
9	initial follow up	5+5+111 5+5+11	1111 5	1 1		
10	initial follow up	5 5+5	5+5 5+5	11 11		1
11	initial follow up	5+5+111 5+5+111	1111 1111	1		
12	initial follow up	5+5+111 5+5+5	11 1	1 1	11	
13	initial follow up	5+5+1 5+5+1111	5+11 11	1		
14	initial follow up	11 1	111 111	111 11	5+1111 5+1111	1 11
15	initial follow up	5+5 5+5+1	5+111 5		1	
16	initial follow up	5+111 5+1111	5+1 5+1	1 1	111 1	
17	initial follow up				1111 1111	5+5+1111 5+5+111

18	initial	5+5+11	5	1		
	follow up	5+5+111	1111			
19	initial		11	5+111	5	111
	follow up		5+111	1111	111	11
20	initial	5+11	5+1111	11		
	follow up	5+1111	5+1	11		
21	initial	11	5	111	5+11	1
	follow up		1	111	5+5+111	1
22	initial	5+11	5+5		1	
	follow up	5+111	5+1111		1	
23	initial		5+1	1	5+1111	11
	follow up		5	1	5+5	11
24	initial	5+5	5+11	1		
	follow up	5+11	5+1111	11		
25	initial	5+1111	5+11	11		
	follow up	5+1111	5+111	1		
26	follow up	5	5+11	11	111	
27	follow up	5+11	5+1111	1		
28	follow up	5+5+111	1111			

APPENDIX E

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY RESPONSES

1 What was most helpful to you in this class?

no answer

I like the books we could read

The concept of evangelizing my children & not assuming salvation.

Encouragement to pray & be proactive.

Showing me how important is it to be a good disciple to our children

Tom teaching

The time you spend with your kids and teaching them God's love, and how to live daily

While the education of the child is important, it's really the parent
the church needs to teach.

The lessons such as Lesson 2, questions 1 & 2

Looking for opportunities to disciple children

Resources to go to (books, web-pages)

Tool Times - breaking down into steps

Just bringing the focus back to what is expected of me by God

Witnessing to the grandchildren how Jesus has taught me how to love everyone
and to always pray for others

Bible verses

The approach of the way discipleship is taught

ideas on readings to do with my kid

learning principles of discipleship

having the booklet to take home

I never really thought of parenting consider to be discipling never connected

2 What was confusing and/or unclear in this class?

It was kind of hard since we no longer have kids at home.

no answer

Would like to spend more time on the 8 principles (detail) from first lesson
& discuss ideas to apply them in family life.

Nothing

I do not see now

no answer

Our roles as grandparents in the face of our limited contact
the life-style approach I can't remember it

The specifics of what the family unit should be about.

How we teach and support one another in the family culture.

Nothing

relating to older children, away from home

no answer

It was difficult for me to help my children/grandchildren since they live away from me when I need to use my tools

nothing

no answer

no answer

N/A

I was understanding the information I received

3 What specific three things will you follow-through on as a result of this class?

Pray each day for grand kids and kids

read, pray, let children help more

Better, more focused prayer talk more about God than church

talk more about God and less or about God and less about Church

interaction with children

Spend individual time with each child

Read the word of God daily with them

Teach them to share the word of God with others

Pray more for your child

I will discipleship my child

Pray for spiritual life

Helping them do more with me

Reading God's Word

Prayer with them

Listen to my children more closely and respond biblically to what I hear.

Daily prayer for children and grandchildren

re-reading my book and trying to incorporate the lessons learned and teaching them to my children

Being patient, being intentional, and being creative in discipling children

Seeing opportunities to teach

praying more specifically

taking more time

focused prayer for each child

regular/daily Bible reading

Prayer - specific for them

Devotion times

remind myself to allow them to try to help - help them when they need it

read Bible stories to them

ask them to tell me stories

teach them how God created the world in 6 days

praying more for children

look for discipling opportunities
look for disciples
keep discipling purposeful
1.) specific prayers
2.) look for new things to teach
3.) morning reading scriptures
spend more time with children, prayer, devotions
main thing for me is I need to think of parenting more than "clean your room"
raise kids with morals and value but outright discipling - heaven the goal

4 Are there any specific topics you would have liked covered?

no answer
no answer
no answer
no, you did a very good job
I like all of week but 2 week good for me
How to get teens to be more interested in God
None come to mind
no
no answer
ways to discipline
no answer
no answer
no
no
no answer
no answer
N/A
no answer

5 Prior to this class have you heard of Life-Style discipleship or Life-Style evangelism?

no
no
yes
no
no answer
No
No
no
yes
no

no
yes
yes
no
no answer
not specifically
I never really thought of parenting consider to be discipling never connected

If so, what was your understanding of it prior to and after the class?

no answer
a little reading, taking them to church
It was applied outside family
no answer
no answer
Doing what I do now, just more reading
no answer
I enjoy rereading my book and learning from the lessons then being able
to teach my children
teach by example
no answer
no answer
just what it says - you living your life and teaching the children
no answer
no answer
no answer
no answer
no answer
no answer

What is your understanding now?

It is a daily task
working with your children
Also applies to family
Evangelize and discipling is very important
no answer
teenage yrs now what?
It's a constant, daily matter of teaching, including and encouraging
That we are to pray with and read our Bibles with our children
We have to be constantly aware and deliberate in our actions
no answer
I think I did many of these things t/o the years, including children in daily tasks,

responsibilities, daily devotions. Haven't seen it demonstrated in their lives as adults.

no answer

more interaction w/ my grand children, better role modeling with my grand children

I need to spend more time focused on the kids

disciple +/- evangelize by just living a Christ centered life

no answer

no answer

no answer

6 What specific things can your church do to help you disciple your child/children?

pray - good teaching

classes for parents

Small groups

Make sure to stress the importance of discipling to the parents

Teaching at church how to be disciplined

Help get my kids interested in church

As a grandparent, I'm not sure.

teach me more about Jesus and what He taught/teaches

Study and teach God's principles on how to disciple our children

just talking to one another but maybe having a more in depth parenting class

Be there to include my/their families.

re-teach this class every so often

more age appropriate teaching classes

pray

reinforce Biblical principles I teach

keep me informed of new books, teachings and keep me learning

have these studies

just keep discipling and preaching the word of God to the parents.

keep eyes on God

7 How can you transfer these principles to your grandchildren?

It would be easier if we were with the grandkids daily but will have to pass them on when we are with them.

spend more time with them in reading the Bible

Support children who are(??) parents

Spend time with grandkid

Make sure you instill them in your children

The same way you child: discipleship, pray for, love them

to be persistent in prayer and reading God's word

That's a struggle considering the lack of regular contact with them.

The only thing I can think of is modeling the correct life style every day.

pray for them and teach them about Jesus by having devotions
with them and praying with them daily
teach and live what is taught by example
when they are with me take opportunities to use these principles
Try again with more prayer
no answer
By having one on one principle learning tools for each child
through your children
remind my child or disciple how they learned
teach our children well
by teaching your children to teach their children
by keep discipling the children and start when they are born

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